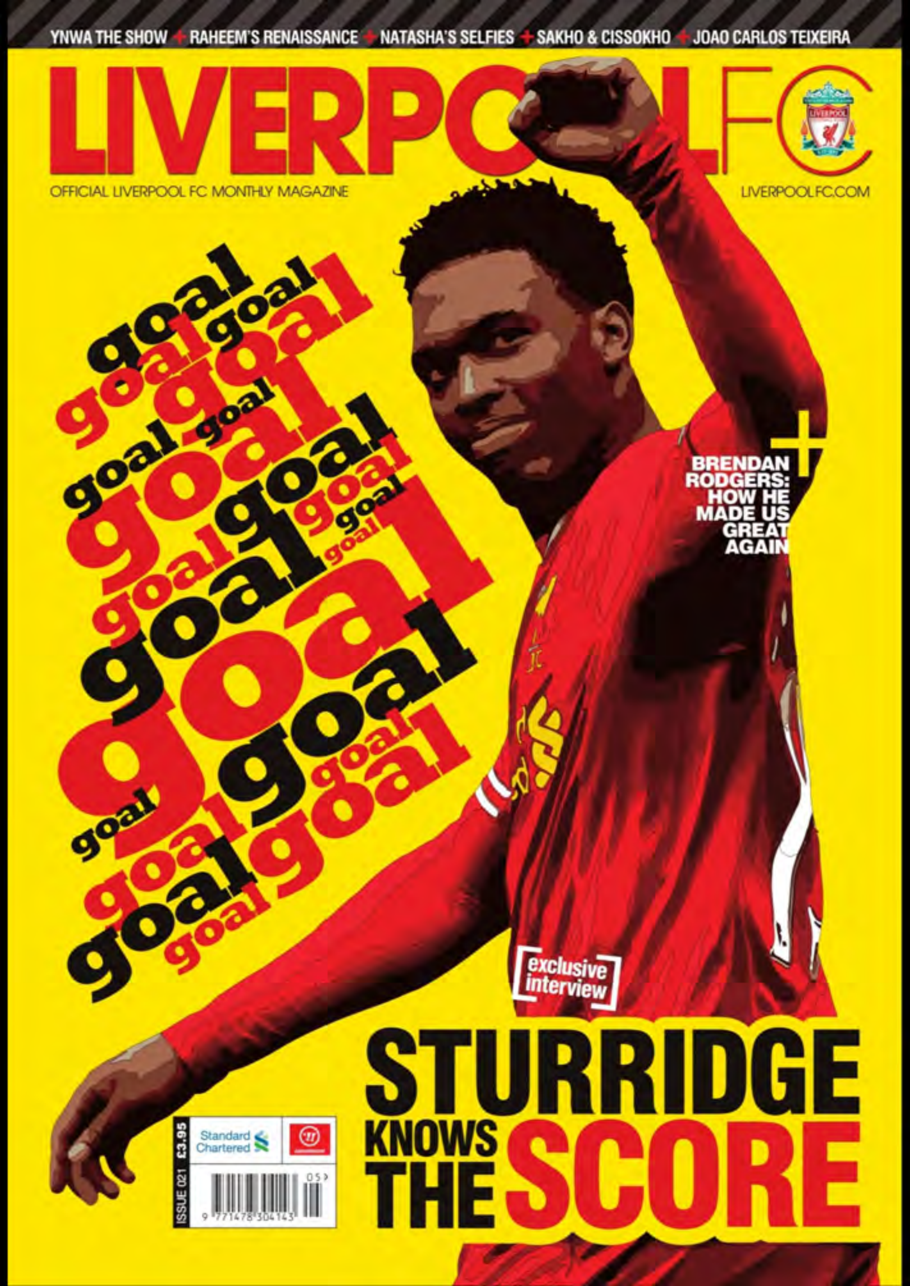

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AL

Liverpool's prolific striker on goalscoring, the manager, his partnership with Luis, comparisons with Fowler, and the wonder of Coutinho. Interview: John Hynes



Quite often the performance of a young player will catch the eye, leading people to quickly tag them as a star for the future. Anyone who witnessed the second leg of the 2006 Youth Cup final between Manchester City and Liverpool probably did exactly the same when it came to one individual in particular.

The Reds, managed by Steve Heighway, went into the tie 3-0 up from the first meeting of the teams and eventually picked up the trophy but only after a nervous 2-0 defeat. In scoring both goals for his vanquished team that night – the first a superb bending effort from outside the box – a 16-year-old striker named Daniel Sturridge suggested he could one day be a star in the Premier League.

Fast-forward to January 2013 and, as he completed a transfer to Liverpool, there were a minority of doubts whether the striker would fulfill the potential he'd so clearly illustrated at the ground then known as Eastlands. His spells at City and then Chelsea hadn't brought him a regular place in either team. Only a loan stay at Bolton, where he netted eight goals in 12 games, suggested he could consistently do it at the highest level.

At the time of Sturridge's switch to Anfield, Jim Cassell, the former Academy director at City who'd brought Daniel to the club as a 13-year-old, voiced concerns about his former protegee's future: "In English football we sometimes don't get the most out of our young players. The problem is enabling them to really establish themselves. The English game needs to be patient with these young talents."

Simultaneously Cassell had no qualms about Sturridge's ability: "He has the potential to be a top-class international striker." His point was that the player just needed a chance. Sturridge felt exactly the same way.

"Coming here was all about getting an opportunity," the 24-year-old now says of his switch from London to Liverpool. "If you are on the bench and not playing it's obviously very difficult to show what you can really do. You can't. I wanted an opportunity to showcase my abilities. The manager told me I'd get to play week in, week out here. That was great to hear and exactly what I wanted."

He credits the management of Brendan Rodgers as playing a major part in him producing what's been rightly described as stunning form since becoming a Liverpool player. "When the boss told me I would play it meant I was relaxed from the very start. I wasn't stressed about anything or worrying about if I'd be picked the following week."







Daniel at Melwood during our interview

Only seven minutes in to his LFC career he showed just how calm he was by latching onto Jonjo Shelvey's pass and producing a first-time finish to make it 1-0 against Mansfield Town in the FA Cup. Since then, goal after goal after goal has followed. At the end of his maiden half-season with Liverpool he'd found the net 11 times – including his first hat-trick in senior football during a 3-1 win at Fulham.

When he scored at the same venue in mid-February of this year – in a thrilling 3-2 victory – it was his 30th goal for the club. That milestone was reached in just 37 appearances. At one point during 2013/14 his scoring ratio in the league was a goal every 83 minutes. Of those playing in Europe's major competitions only Sergio Aguero had fared better.

While that kind of information makes for great reading it's not something the player pays too much attention to. "My family have told me about those stats. I haven't looked at them myself. I prefer to concentrate on working hard to help us win and be successful. Success is more important than any stats."

While the sheer number of goals Sturridge has registered is undoubtedly impressive, it's also the variety of them that has caught the eye. To mention but a few: the last-minute header in the derby draw; an exact chip against West Brom; crisp low drives against both Stoke and Manchester City; a mazy dribble in a victory at Aston Villa; and a host of composed finishes in one-on-one situations. Some supporters have said the numerous methods that Sturridge employs to find the net remind them of Robbie Fowler, a player he trained with when they were both at City. He isn't convinced by those type of comparisons.

"It's amazing to hear people say something like that. But there is a long way for me to go to be anywhere as good as Robbie Fowler. When the fans call you 'God' that tells you everything you need to know. I'm a very, very long way away from his level."

"There's a long way for me to go to be anywhere near as good as Robbie Fowler"

Fowler is just one former Liverpool striker who's been heard to praise our current no15. Ian Rush and John Aldridge have done the same. They've also been on hand to offer words of wisdom. "I've had a chat with some of them," Sturridge reveals. "The advice I most regularly hear from the ex-players is to make sure you are in the positions to miss. If you aren't then that is the time to start worrying. They've said: don't get down if you miss – once you are getting in the positions in the first place the chances will eventually go in."

Like Fowler, Rush or Aldridge, he clearly has that instinct or eye for goal we often hear mentioned. But it's hours on the training ground which have helped him hone it to the levels that have regularly thrilled Kopites.

"When you are a kid who scores goals all of the time you just think it's normal," he explains. "You don't think about it too much. You don't actually realise you can do something others can't. I have that knack for scoring. At the same time I think you can always work at it and improve on it. I think it's important that you try to keep getting better and better. That's my aim."

It's also on the pitches at Melwood where his partnership with Luis Suarez has developed in to one of the most effective around. "We spend our time out there linking up and looking for each other's runs. Then, because we've done it so often, it seems to happen in games too. It's important you have team-mates who know you, understand your movements and can help you."

Inevitably, when two individuals who are so hungry to score goals line up alongside each other there will be occasions when one shoots and the other feels he should have passed. "Of course," Daniel acknowledges. "That's the nature of football. It will always happen when you have two strikers who love putting the ball in the net as



much as we do. There are going to be times when I try to score and he might have thought he was in a better position or vice-versa. But the most important thing isn't that either me or Luis score, it's that the team wins. Once that happens we're all happy."

While Sturridge and Suarez have combined very well, it is not just the Uruguayan who has provided assists for the England international on a regular basis. "There's also Stevie, Raheem, Jordan, Joe and Coutinho." The latter is someone whom Sturridge feels sometimes doesn't get enough praise for his exquisite talents. "Coutinho's the man. I've said that on the pitch when we've been celebrating goals a few times [against Everton and Arsenal]. He finds me a lot. Some of his passing is pinpoint-accurate. He spots runs and he plays the ball as early as possible to put you through. The type of passes he tries are often killer balls, and because of that they sometimes won't come off. But when they do they are superb. I don't think he gets the credit his passing should."

Someone else who undoubtedly deserves praise is Brendan Rodgers, for signing Sturridge in the first place and then helping him develop. On the day the striker's move to us became a reality early last year, the boss

"It's important to have team-mates who know you and your movements"

stated how much he was looking forward to working with the new arrival – and Daniel has found the manager's attacking philosophy very much to his liking.

"It's great to play for someone who wants the team to go forward and produce free-flowing football. As a striker there isn't much more you can ask for. The boss wants us to retain possession, create angles and make ourselves available to receive the ball. By doing that you tire the opposition out. Then opportunities will come along and it's up to us to convert them."

That's all Sturridge ever needed – a proper chance. He's taking it in style.



The goal v Arsenal again from Coutinho's assist

Aldo on Sturridge – on LFC TV

"Daniel Sturridge – not just this season, since he's joined the club – has shown what he's all about. I probably didn't expect him to do so well, in all honesty. So the expectations weren't as high as what we've got, which is brilliant. All strikers will tell you, they want to score one goal in every two games or less. Well, his rate of goals has been tremendous. I knew he'd score goals but not the amount that he's done, in such a short period of games...

"In the modern game you have to have pace upfront. For years we didn't have much of it at the club, and now we've got Suarez, Sterling, Coutinho and Sturridge. Tell me who's the quickest out of them... I'm sure Daniel would think he was. He's like lightning, his pace is invaluable. But obviously he's got the instinct of a natural goalscorer. He gets on the shoulders of defenders, and when you've got pace like him, to burn, you're never going to catch him.

"As well as being a goalscorer he's got natural ability with both feet. He can dribble, he keeps the ball very close. When we were kids we were told to have the ball on our shoelaces, and that's the type of things that he does. He's very skilful, very adept dribbling as well.

"One area that he can improve – and we're nitpicking here – maybe now and again when he's got an acute angle he could roll Suarez in. It's difficult, I've been in those areas and when you're a natural goalscorer you want to score. Sometimes if there's a little tap-in, in a big game, it might just give us the edge where perhaps the goalie's got his shot covered...

"I think there's more to come. He's a young lad scoring goals and that's where it's a bonus. Get mentally strong and keep on learning – you're always learning – and he's going to be invaluable to Liverpool in the future."



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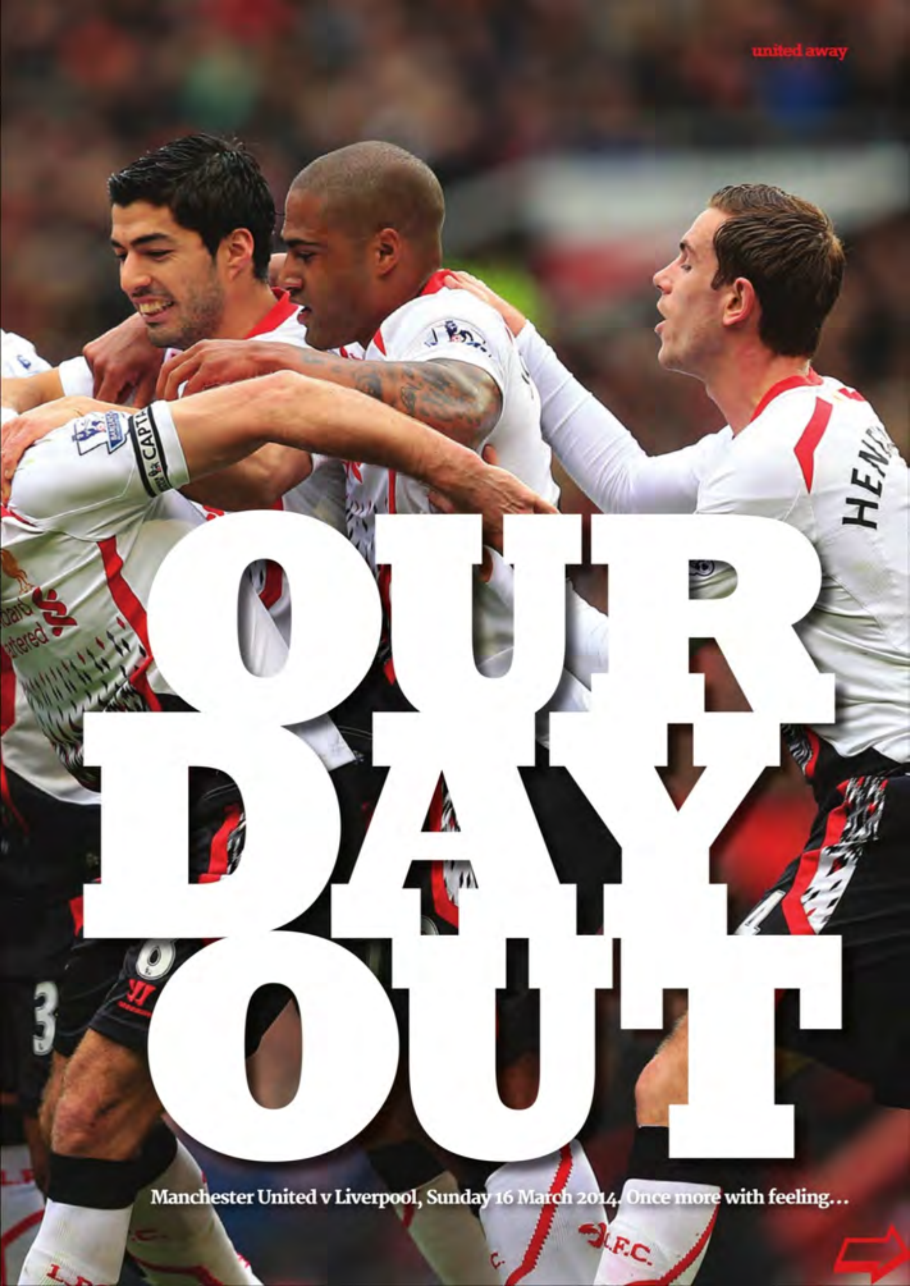


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FROM THE PRESS BOX

No celebrating: the unwritten rule inside the press boxes of football stadiums. Broadcasters are able to reflect the unfolding drama in front of them by raising their voices. Yet the written media – well they have to keep quiet. There is only reason to type. Emotions remain hidden.

I had achieved this before. Hands glued to lap. Feet stapled to the floor. Bottom sewn to seat. Scarf across the face. Hood up. No colours. There were winning goals at Goodison, at Stamford Bridge, and at the Emirates. Yet the possibilities here felt like they had different implications: at Old Trafford – the venue for a match of genuine significance which might determine whether Liverpool really are title contenders. It felt like a watershed moment.

I can remember the confusing days after Liverpool drew four-all at Everton 23 years ago. A friend had been mascot, arriving at school the following morning with a signed photo from Kenny Dalglish. Within 36 hours, Dalglish had resigned and soon the Anfield rot took hold. Naturally, I blamed the friend. I revisit all those disappointments. Through the rest of the 90s: United winning titles, Liverpool coming third, fourth or worse. Then the Noughties: there were cups, some historic moments of celebration. But no title. United always recovered. Liverpool were never really there.

Perhaps that goes some way to explaining why, as the players strode out onto the pitch, the public address announcer insisted that United were the greatest team on the planet. Whistles came from the travelling fans, no more than 50 yards to my right. Liverpool set about deconstructing that claim. Hustling, swarming over the midfield; United panicked, surrendering possession.



Enter the gladiators: viewed from the South Stand press box



Sturridge crossed towards Suarez. He flicked past Rafael, it hit his hand and the referee pointed to the spot. Gerrard stroked Liverpool into the lead, in front of the Stretford End. There was no sign of celebration from the captain. There was still work to be done. There was no sign of celebration in the press box. Somehow.

Shortly before half-time Mignolet crucially repelled a volley from Rooney. Just after the break Liverpool were awarded a second penalty when Allen was shoved over by Jones. Gerrard took the responsibility again. The cameras waited, closing in on his face, then De Gea's like a Western stand-off. The outcome was the same, hard towards the keeper's left. Gerrard revelled in this one, kissing a camera lens. In the press box all remained calm. Somehow.

The suppression of feeling was weirdly exhilarating. Across the wide expanses of the pitch before me, Liverpool's control was absolute. Allen snapped into challenges. Henderson did the same. Sterling wriggled free, penetrating United's defence. Gerrard was everywhere: coolly intercepting, using his whole body to block when necessary and launching attacks from his position at the base of a midfield diamond. Flanagan crunched into tackles. Johnson raided up the right. Skrtel and Agger never seemed troubled. Suarez and Sturridge were always there, agitating.

Remarkably Liverpool were awarded another penalty. Gerrard hit the post with this one. For his indiscretion, Vidic, was sent off. Liverpool kept coming. United were flattened. Suarez reacted quickly to a scuffed shot by Sturridge before finishing with his left foot. In the directors' box Kenny Dalglish rose, his face radiant. Behind him, Diego Maradona, watching as a guest, clapped away.

With that, it was all over. There had been sweat, leather, bone, black eyes and blood; tackles, passes, headers and moments of individual brilliance. In the post-match press conference, Brendan Rodgers mentioned the name of every player that had started at least once. This truly was a team performance. Outwardly Rodgers appeared calm. Inwardly he must have been screaming. Like me.

Simon Hughes




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FROM THE AWAY END

When David Fairclough scored against St Etienne all those years ago, the only Liverpool fan inside Anfield that night who didn't jump up and down was in the seat next to my father in the old Kemlyn Road stand. His name was Vinny, he had a heart condition and he was on special tablets. They both used to laugh about it afterwards, and I'm thinking about them now as Steven Gerrard shimmies up to take a penalty at the Stretford End.

Perched just behind the *Make Us Dream* tryptich in the away end, I think: if this goes in I'm not going mad. Not because I'm worried about my own ticker even though it's walloping against my ribcage. It's just that against United, at Old Trafford, I've got used to plodding between the poles of hope and endurance. I've had that much heartbreak at this fixture – beginning with a 3-1 defeat in the Rumbelows Cup when an ageing Stevie Nicol got skinned down the left by a precocious Lee Sharpe – that I never ever get too carried away. I missed the 4-1 in 2009, shopping with the squeeze in Covent Garden at wit's end, phone switched off.

So when the skipper coolly despatches his spot-kick, for me there's no euphoria, just relief. For me, that is. For everyone else it's pure bouncing bedlam. One-nil. On my left my pal Jim appears to be sumo-wrestling me. To the right an 'owlfella' with bushy nostrils is joyously fending us off. Then 'We are Liverpool!" properly gets going.

All this week people who should've known better were getting too cocky by half with all the pre-match sabre-rattling. After the morning's brief subdued parenthesis along the M62, it started again pre-kick-off inside the East Stand gangways where wall-mounted TVs replayed Stevie's wondergoal in the 2006 FA Cup final. It takes a swift pie and a pint of Boddies, the best thing to come out of Manchester since the East Lancs Road (etc), to calm this particular nesh get's nerves.

We're back inside at half-time for a wide-eyed rendezvous with dispersed mates before giving it toes to get back for Gerrard's second. Two-nil. "I'll have to sit down," says the owlfella on the right. When the third penalty is awarded and David De Gea tries the mind-games, Jim turns to me and says: "Watch what Gerrard does when this goes in." Missed, obviously. Two-nil, still.

The golden rule of the Man United match: never, ever jinx it. Not even when Suarez scores – three-nil – and the whole end is singing "We're gonna win the league."

When the final whistle finally goes – and I've finally seen Liverpool win here after so many years of disappointment – I hug Jim and a couple of close-by randoms and turn to the owlfella on my right. Are those tears of joy in his eyes or has he just yanked a few hairs out of his nose? I'll never know.

I used to think that wins at Old Trafford were like royal flushes – they'd take a little luck, a lot of savvy, and an ace up the sleeve. But today good fortune hardly came into it. Just a diamond, dealt by our streetwise boss, and a captain who played it cool. Mission accomplished for the king of clubs.

David Cottrell

Tickety boo: one for the album



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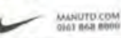
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"Our vision is very simple: to win trophies, to play attacking, exciting football and with as many young players from our academy base. If we can put something in place that rolls that out over a number of years, then that is why I was brought in. This is only the beginning."
Brendan Rodgers



Flexibility

Until Brendan Rodgers arrived at Anfield in the summer of 2012, his teams at Watford, Reading and Swansea usually played a variation of 4-3-3 and 4-2-3-1. During his first season as Liverpool manager, these were the formations used, and his plan was well-defined: "I want the goalkeeper to be part of the play, the centre-backs and the 'controller' (a deep-lying playmaker), then the full-backs pushed on, the two attacking midfielders, the wingers and then the centre-forward. That allows you to draw seven horizontal lines across the pitch." In his second campaign at Anfield there has been a shift in thought and perhaps a less dogmatic approach. Depending on the availability of players and the nature of the opposition, Liverpool's shape has switched between 3-5-2, 4-4-2 and 4-1-2-1-2 as well as the aforementioned formations.

Double trouble

Ian Rush, Liverpool's all-time leading goalscorer, was also one of the club's greatest defenders, relentlessly closing centre-halves down. Ability only takes a player so far – a mantra clearly heeded by the two strikers currently leading Liverpool's front line. Originally Rodgers wanted to play with one centre-forward and two wingers, with either one or two attacking midfielders supplying both areas. Whether operating as a two or a front three, most regularly including either Raheem Sterling or Philippe Coutinho, the duo of Luis Suarez and Daniel Sturridge have sides pinned back – enabling their team-mates to follow. In a three, the pair exchange positions, confusing the opposition. The twin threat had yielded more goals than any other partnership in the Premier League at the time of writing.

THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO BRENDAN RODGERS

A 10-step guide to the Liverpool manager's winning ways

Goals all over the park

Last summer the manager's aim was to "add 20 more goals" to his squad through player recruitment. At the beginning of March, Liverpool had already bettered their total from last season with 10 games to play. It is remarkable too that scoring statistics have been improved via the efforts of players already at Anfield. "It's not my job to look for excuses," the boss said in June. "I have to find the solutions to push us and I believe we won't be too far away." While Suarez and Sturridge have contributed more than half of the goals, those solutions have been found via the improved contributions of Raheem Sterling and Jordan Henderson.

Keeping the faith

At all of his previous clubs Rodgers had used a slightly smaller, perhaps more agile goalkeeper; springing off his line to begin attacking moves with accurate passing. "When we have the ball, everybody's a player," he said. "The difference with us is that when we have the ball we play with 11 men – other teams play with 10 and a goalkeeper." It seemed Pepe Reina would suit the style but the Spaniard was allowed to leave for Napoli and replaced by a different type of keeper in Simon Mignolet. The Belgian considers his strengths more traditional: getting in the way of shots. Yet he admits he has to improve with the ball at his feet. It's meant that rather than passing backwards, Liverpool go forwards. This has resulted in a more intense approach, frequently overwhelming the opposition.

Counter-attacking

When Rodgers arrived at Liverpool he delivered some interesting statistics. "This is our philosophy," he explained. "I like to control games. I like to be responsible for our own destiny. If you are better than your opponent with the ball you have a 79 per cent chance of winning the game. For me it is quite logical. It doesn't matter how big or small you are, if you don't have the ball you can't score." While Liverpool continue, indeed, to dominate most teams in terms of possession, he has been prepared to concede it at certain times in certain encounters. With the pace and penetrative abilities of Liverpool's attacking players, there have been games where the team has waited for its moment, drawing the opposition in before exploding forward to score a goal.

The controller

Since the 5-3 victory at Stoke City in January, Steven Gerrard has played every game as the deepest player in Liverpool's midfield. With two younger players pressing in front, the role allows him to drop deeper than the two central defenders, becoming the first outfield person to receive possession, thus enabling him to dictate the passing patterns of the game. Rodgers spoke of Gerrard's character, insisting he has the "personality" to be successful in a different position to the one he has filled throughout his career. Liverpool look a more confident team with the captain dictating proceedings. Despite being further away from the goal, he's still managed to set up more goals than any other player in the Premier League, with Suarez a close second.





Goodison set-piece: Gerrard free-kick, Sturridge goal

Set-pieces

Until the early-1990s, a group of Liverpool supporters published a fanzine entitled *Another Wasted Corner*. Even in the glory years, set-pieces were rarely capitalised on. Neither Alan Hansen, Phil Thompson nor Mark Lawrenson wandered up. The focus in training was limited to five and six-a-side matches. It just wasn't the Liverpool way to fire a cross towards the chaos inside the box. Now, Liverpool have two players capable of the perfect delivery. Many of Gerrard and Suarez's assists have arrived from corners and free-kicks. Important goals have been scored, including three in the Mersey derby: Gerrard to Coutinho, Gerrard to Sturridge (both at Goodison), then Suarez to Gerrard (Anfield). The same routine tricked Arsenal twice in minutes at Anfield when Martin Skrtel met a succession of Gerrard kicks. During training sessions, attention has been drawn to the detail, with both Suarez and Gerrard staying behind to rehearse these moments.

Learn from mistakes

Rodgers has always claimed that he spends longer analysing the things that went wrong in games rather than the things that went right. Two-thirds of the way through this campaign, Liverpool had not suffered the same fate in fixtures where they'd lost last season. Rodgers insists his staff deserve credit for this. Chris Davies, head of opposition analysis, spent a lot of time

> "We look at the strengths and weaknesses of other teams offensively and defensively"

over the summer and pre-season watching videos of all games in the previous campaign. "The factors are the strengths and weaknesses of the team," he explains. "Offensively, their style of play, key threats, transition tactics, physical profiles and how they score. Defensively, their style of play, transition tactics, individual weaknesses, spacial vulnerabilities, collective weaknesses and how they concede."

Recovery

At the start of March, Liverpool had only once endured a sequence of two successive defeats: at Man City then at Chelsea towards the end of December. Without European commitments Liverpool have, indeed, had less games to play and more time to re-focus when results do not meet expectations. Even after bad results like the one at Hull City, he has kept faith with younger players like Sterling. "I was disappointed with myself [after Hull] because I'd been looking for a chance and I didn't take it," Sterling said. "It was one of those bad days in football. They can happen. But you have to react. Thankfully the manager had the faith to put me in the team again the following game. I was delighted with that – I'm really grateful. I had to go out there and do more."

Intensity

Before Rodgers was appointed as manager, he presented a 190-page manifesto to John W Henry. It illustrated his grand vision for the club, forensically detailing a determination to play "attractive, attacking football," writing of a commitment to winning trophies and a desire to "bring through as many young players as we possibly can." In his first press conference he spoke of the need to make Anfield a "fortress" once again. This season, Liverpool have started games fast, racing into unassailable leads, the energy and attacking intent of their young players too much to deal with for the opposition. Where once Liverpool dropped points against teams they should probably be beating, now they attack them from the kick-off, not allowing time to settle. This has been a deliberate ploy by Rodgers who admitted at the beginning of his reign that he wanted to make any visit to Anfield "the longest 90 minutes" of their lives.

Words: Simon Hughes


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Nothing beats a real buzz around Melwood at this stage of the season

Didi HAMANN



During the latter months of the season you can usually tell how a club is faring simply by the atmosphere on the training ground. If the place is buzzing and everyone is happy with nobody complaining about niggles, then the team is probably doing well.

If plenty of players are sitting out the sessions and the place is quiet then you know their campaign – in terms of winning something – is over. When that happens fatigue can quickly set in. Players can switch off. Some might start thinking about moving on, with agents suggesting new destinations.

If that situation occurs it's disheartening. You play football to win trophies, so if that isn't possible you can understand why it has a negative impact on the mindset of individuals.

The flip-side is there is nothing better than getting to April or May and knowing you can still get your hands on a prize. People talk about the pressure of must-win games. Playing in them isn't a pressure – it's a joy. Real pressure is being at the wrong end of the league and knowing that relegation could cost players and staff their jobs. In that situation you are playing for people's livelihoods. Whereas challenging for a league title or getting to the latter stages of the FA Cup or Champions League is a pleasure.

During my seven years at Liverpool the closest we came to being champions was in 2001/02, eventually finishing seven points behind Arsenal. We knew that we had to win every time we went on the field. But that's why you play football, to be in those situations. Every player was giving their all in training because they wanted to either retain their place in the side or get back in.

The season before, when we won three cups, was similar. At one point we seemed to have a vital game every three or four days. There was no talk about what it'd be like to pick up the trophies. I'm sure everyone imagined it but we didn't openly discuss it in the dressing-room. Our approach was the same from the start of the season till the end. We tried to remain humble and never took any opponent lightly. That was what had put us in a great position in the first place, so there was no need to change.

"Fans get carried away, players can't"

Naturally supporters get carried away as the chance of success becomes more of a possibility. They spend lots of time and money following the club, so the rise in their excitement levels is understandable. It's great to hear them talking about upcoming games.

But as a player you can't get caught up in any of that. You need to concentrate on your job. Only when you've done it properly and you are parading a trophy around in front of a joyous crowd can you allow yourself to get swept away by emotion. Again, that moment is part of what football is all about.

Follow Didi on Twitter @dietmarhamann



"IT'S GREAT TO PLAY WITH GERRARD, SUAREZ, COUTINHO AND STURRIDGE... YOU JUST HAVE TO ENJOY THE FOOTBALL AND LOOK AND LEARN"

Liverpool's young Portuguese playmaker Joao Carlos Teixeira reflects on three defining moments in his career to date, with William Hughes



The fruits of the hard work that goes in every day at Liverpool Football Club's Academy is best measured by the harvest produced for the first team. The coaching staff of the various youth teams regularly stress that the barometer of progress is the number of players who come into Brendan Rodgers' plans rather than standings in any league tables.

By that yardstick the Reds have compared favourably with their Premier League rivals over the past couple of seasons.

Since the Northern Irishman was appointed manager of Liverpool in the summer of 2012, eight players have graduated from the LFC Academy to make their first-team debuts.

The latest in that number is Joao Carlos Teixeira, the Portuguese playmaker signed from Sporting Lisbon in January 2012 on the back of outstanding performances against the Reds during the inaugural NextGen Series.

Teixeira only turned 21 in January but can point to three significant signposts on his pathway to becoming a Premier League footballer.

Step one was taking the decision to fly the family nest in the northwest of Portugal at the tender age of 13 after being offered the chance to pursue his footballing dreams at Sporting Lisbon. Speaking candidly in an interview room at Melwood, he explains: "I started playing with my friends when I was seven or eight. In Portugal, kids usually like football and I would join in the games at college.

"I enjoyed it but the interest didn't come from my family. My mum and dad didn't really understand football, nor my grandfather, though some of my uncles were keen. My dad watches football now but he's not the kind of person who would know all the names of the players at the various teams.

"I began to play for a small club in Braga. Soon afterwards though I moved to a different school so I played there one year before moving back to my original club. From there I joined the youth system at SC Braga, whose stadium was less than 10 minutes' walk from my home."

His talent stood out in the seven-a-side youth games he would participate in on a weekly basis and when Sporting Lisbon came calling his parents were faced with a dilemma. "When I moved to Sporting it wasn't really my decision because I was just 13, which is too young. Lisbon is more than three hours from Braga and it was more a decision taken by my mum and dad. But they told me: if this is what you really want, we are not going to take it from you. It was the hardest thing I have ever done and in the beginning it was really hard.



"We stayed at the Hilton Hotel and were so excited to come to England, Anfield Road, Liverpool..."

I switched my school, left my friends behind...changed everything. But it is like everything in life – sometimes you have to take risks."

The Academica Sporting, on the southern bank of the River Tejo on the outskirts of the city, was the first purpose-built football academy of its kind in Portugal. "I used to live there with 60 other boys aged 13 to 19 and we stayed in dorms," Joao explains. "We lived there with people who worked with us. They would take care of us and help us with our school studies and so on.

"I wanted to take the opportunity and was determined to keep going and not give up. I had some bad moments along the way as everybody does. At times it was hard but I wanted to succeed."

In August 2011, Sporting were drawn to play away to Liverpool in their opening fixture of the NextGen Series, a new youth tournament featuring Europe's elite teams. "I remember that day clearly," he says. "We were staying in the Hilton Hotel and were all excited because we knew we were coming to play at Anfield. It was a new thing for us – England, Anfield Road, Liverpool – all this was an amazing experience for a group of young players. We were really happy because we won the game 3-0 and I also scored in front of the Kop. If I'm honest, I have to admit I didn't know too much about it beforehand. But people were talking about it before the game and afterwards I searched for it on the



internet and quickly found out the full story of the Kop.

"I thought the NextGen Series was a great idea because we played in different countries and sampled different types of football which meant we could improve as players."

Teixeira was the stand-out player at Anfield that sunny summer evening. Steven Gerrard, a man who knows a thing or two about a midfield performance, was in the Main Stand that night and recalled: "I could see straightaway he was the best player on the pitch. Now, you can see he wants to learn and listen. He has respect for the other players in the dressing-room. This is the start for him now. I've just told him that he needs to push on, keep learning and building on what he has achieved."

Teixeira's display in a Sporting Lisbon side that also featured Tiago Ilori at centre-back would have wide-ranging consequences, prompting Liverpool

Joao in youth action against Aston Villa



"I prefer to play as a no10 or no8 but I can also play from the left of the pitch or as an orthodox midfielder"

to make a move for his services. In January 2012 a deal was agreed to bring the teenager to the Academy.

Yet he had barely arrived on Merseyside when he was faced with the second major challenge of his career. His medical revealed a serious back injury that necessitated the wearing of a back brace for six months. Even so the Reds decided to press ahead with the deal – something which meant everything to the youngster.

"I think finding out about the injury was the worst moment of my life. I came here and found out about this problem with my back and I thought maybe it could finish my career. At that moment I was scared. But Liverpool helped me. They always supported me. All the physios and medical staff... Every person in the club helped me, so I have to say thank you to Liverpool because now I am feeling good."

That setback aside, he says the move to England itself wasn't as daunting as his switch from Braga to Lisbon. "Moving to a different country was quite hard but not the same as moving away from Braga because I was older and more mature so mentally I was better prepared for it."

His language skills, too, had been coming along nicely – aided by discussions with his English-born Sporting team-mates Ilori and Eric Dier. "I used to study English in Portugal. Of course it wasn't great at first but I kept improving. At the academy I used to live with Eric Dier (a defender who had a loan spell at Everton in 2011). I have known him since I was 13 and of course his English was perfect. He helped me a lot and then once I arrived here I learnt English with Alan (Redmond – the Academy's language advisor). The difficult thing wasn't understanding, it was speaking. I knew what people were saying to me but couldn't answer back. But after listening and speaking a lot, now it is alright."

Once fit, his footballing education also continued at Kirkby. He explains: "I prefer to play as a no10 or a no8 but can also play from the left, not as a winger, but coming in off that side. I also played as an orthodox midfielder in the Academy to try and help my general progress."

Asked to name the big influences on his career to date, Teixeira mentions Ricardo Sa Pinto among other members of Sporting's backroom staff plus Portuguese national age-group coaches Emilio Peixe and Rui Bento, as well as the Reds Under-21s coach Alex Inglethorpe.

Sa Pinto was in charge of Sporting's NextGen Series team in 2011/12 and progressed to the role of first-team boss. He then had a spell as manager of Red Star Belgrade prior to taking up his current post at Greek Superleague club OFI Crete. "When I was younger I think I had my best year under him and I learned a lot. A lot. He changed a few things in the team. In Portugal we were probably the best team in our age group but with him as coach we improved and got even better."

By the start of this season, the Reds felt the time was right for Teixeira to spend some time at a league club. In September he joined Brentford on a youth loan which was set to run until 5 January. His time with the League One club however would turn into his third big test. On 14 September he made his Football League debut as a late substitute in a 4-3 win at Tranmere Rovers. Nine days later he came on in the second half of a 2-0 home defeat by Leyton Orient. Those 22 minutes would be the sum total of a stinging stint with the Bees.

Brentford boss Uwe Rosler later admitted Teixeira's prospects of game-time was limited by the club's lowly league standing, and Liverpool recalled him from the London side in October. "Joao came to us at an unfortunate time," explained Rosler, now in charge of Wigan. "Our game is out of rhythm... It is difficult for a player like Joao to show us his true potential in that situation."

Such a setback may have dented the confidence of many young players but Teixeira again responded well. "I always try to look at things in a positive way. I look forward and try to find the best way to come out of the tough moments. Brentford wasn't the best time for me because I didn't play much, but times like that always add to your experiences. I got to know some really nice people there and it showed me how different football can be and how the conditions here at Liverpool are so good. It showed that I have to work hard to be in the best place and for me that is Liverpool because it is a massive club and you have everything you need here."



> "Going on loan showed me that you have to work hard to be in the best place and for me that is Liverpool – it's a massive club"

It speaks volumes for the midfielder's mindset that he bounced back so strongly. A little over four months after his recall from Griffin Park, he was back in London for his next league outing. This time however the venue was Craven Cottage for a Premier League fixture and the man he was replacing as sub was England international Raheem Sterling.

"When I came back I just wanted to play at the Academy. I had been at Brentford for a month and hardly played so when I returned I worked hard, played for the U-21s and started scoring goals. After that, Brendan gave me the chance to train with the first team and I wanted to keep working hard and listen to his advice."

Mixing with a first-team squad was nothing new to Teixeira who had previously trained regularly with Sporting's seniors. "When I was 18, myself, Tiago Ilori and Joao Mario, a midfielder who is now on loan now to Vitoria Setubal, trained with the first team. The three of us used to train every day with the first team and then play for the U-21s on a Saturday. On two occasions I sat on the bench with the first team for Europa League games against Zurich and Lazio.

"As you would expect the intensity in training is different with the first team than it is at the Academy but then there is also a huge difference between training with Liverpool's first team and Sporting's. You are not comparing like with like. The intensity and the quality is much higher here. As soon as I joined in at Melwood and got used to the training my motivation has been really high."

Teixeira impressed sufficiently to be named on the bench for that game at Fulham and Rodgers made his day when he summoned him for action with eight minutes remaining. "I was thinking: maybe I'm going to come on so I have to be calm and do my best. It was a really nice moment for me. Brendan gave me a lot of confidence before I went on. He said to me: 'Don't be afraid and try to shoot and score'. I tried not to be nervous but to keep focused. When you are training well you know you are prepared.

Confidence has come from the manager

"It was an amazing ending with Stevie scoring the winner in the last minute and that made the whole experience taste even better!"

Lining up in the senior side has naturally whetted his appetite for more of the same. Given the mental strength he has exhibited so far, who would bet against him? "It's great to play with Gerrard, Suarez, Coutinho, Sturridge... You just have to enjoy the football because they have so much quality. I try to look at them and not copy but learn.

"I haven't played much senior football but now I have got minutes in the Premier League which is the best league in the world and I'm training with the first team which was a big step for me. Now the focus is on keeping going and hopefully I will get more minutes in the future.

"I have had difficult moments but passed through them and now I have to enjoy my football and focus on being the very best that I can be."

FOUR-TUGAL The Reds quartet of Portuguese stars



ABEL XAVIER
(Jan-Dec 2002)
21 apps 2 goals



RAUL MEIRELES
(Sept 2010-Aug 2011)
41 games 5 goals

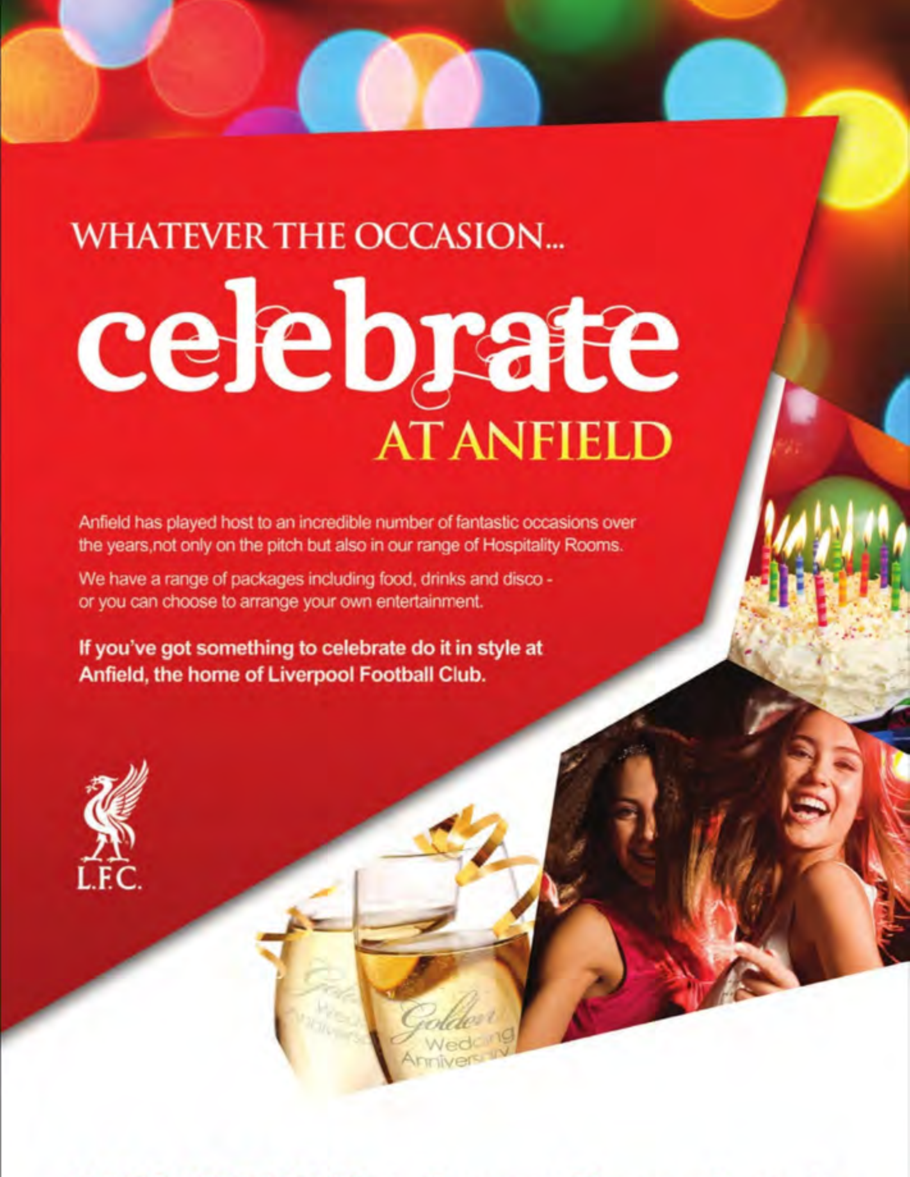


JOAO TEIXEIRA
(signed Jan 2012)
1 game 0 goals



TIAGO ILORI
(signed Sept 2013)
0 games 0 goals

Statistics correct as of 22.03.14


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100







MAN UNITED (A) WON 4-1

Premier League 14 March 2009

A rampant Liverpool tore apart the league leaders and reigning champions with a victory that reignited their hopes of a title challenge. They travelled to Old Trafford in buoyant mood following an impressive midweek victory over Real Madrid and the feel-good factor was extended on an afternoon that the vociferous visiting supporters will always cherish. Despite going a goal down after 23 minutes the silver-shirted Reds responded in spectacular fashion. Fernando Torres punished the hesitant Nemanja Vidic to equalise before the half-hour mark and a Steven Gerrard penalty ensured they were in the ascendancy come half-time. Fabio Aurelio made sure of the points with a stunning free-kick 13 minutes from time and substitute Andrea Dossena added the final layer of gloss to a result – Liverpool's best away win over Manchester United in over three decades – that sent shockwaves reverberating around the Premier League.



PART EIGHT: 30 TO 21 By Mark Platt

GREATEST GAMES

29 CHELSEA (VILLA PARK) WON 2-0

FA Cup semi-final 27 March 1965

Three days after an energy-sapping European Cup tie against FC Cologne in Rotterdam, Liverpool took a major step towards a first success in the FA Cup with victory over Tommy Docherty's highly-rated Chelsea in the semi-final. Shankly's Reds booked their Wembley ticket with a performance that Echo reporter Michael Charters believed to be 'the finest in their history'. For the opening hour little separated the sides and it took a piece of Peter Thompson trickery to break the deadlock – the winger swerving through the defence before unleashing a thunderous shot past Peter Bonetti. When Ian St John was fouled in the box 11 minutes from time Willie Stevenson dispatched his first-ever penalty to ensure a memorable victory.









28 MAN UNITED (WEMBLEY) WON 2-1

Milk Cup final 26 March 1983

For the third year in succession Liverpool came from behind to lift the League Cup and, just like 12 months previously, Ronnie Whelan once again emerged as the Wembley hero. On what was Bob Paisley's final visit to the Twin Towers before retirement it was United who started brighter and Norman Whiteside fired them into a first-half lead. It was deep into the second period before left-back Alan Kennedy drilled a low shot past goalkeeper Gary Bailey to draw Liverpool level and in extra-time the Reds took control as United wilted. In the 98th minute Whelan's right foot sweetly curled home one of the great Wembley goals to put them ahead. From that point the result was never in doubt. What a way for Bob to bow out.





27

EVERTON (A)
WON 4-0

FA Cup fourth round 29 January 1955

Second Division Liverpool pulled off arguably the most surprising result in Merseyside derby history to book their place in the fifth round of the Cup. It was a tie that had the whole city buzzing with anticipation and it lived up to expectations, even if the outcome and manner of victory for the Reds came totally out of the blue. A crowd of 72,000 crammed into Goodison to witness the expected slaughter of a Liverpool side that languished 14th in the second tier and was yet to win away from home all season. But manager Don Welsh got his tactics spot-on, and after Billy Liddell had fired the visitors into an 18th minute lead, a plan to exploit Everton's offside trap at free-kicks worked to perfection when A'Court doubled the advantage following one such well-executed set-piece. John Evans netted a second-half double to complete the unlikely rout and Liverpudlians rejoiced as if they'd won the trophy itself.


Liverpool Echo

Liddell Blasts Everton Out Of The Cup

18-MINUTE GOAL STARTS REDS ON WARPATH

26

FC BRUGES (A)
DREW 1-1

UEFA Cup final 2nd leg 19 May 1976

Liverpool secured their second UEFA Cup success with a composed display on a tension-filled night in Belgium. Leading 3-2 from the first-leg, their advantage was wiped out within 11 minutes after Tommy Smith handled in the area. Raoul Lambert blasted home the spot-kick and, by virtue of the two away-goals Bruges had scored at Anfield, it would've been enough to win the cup. Liverpool pushed forward and four minutes later from an indirect free-kick, Kevin Keegan rifled a low shot through the wall and past the keeper. The English champions then defended resolutely to seal a first European triumph of Bob Paisley's reign as boss.





25

FC BRUGES (H)
WON 3-2

UEFA Cup final 1st leg 28 April 1976

Liverpool could not have got off to a worse start as Anfield staged its second European final. Within 12 minutes of the first whistle Belgian opponents FC Bruges had stunned the home crowd into silence by racing into an unexpected two-goal lead, courtesy of strikes from Raoul Lambert and Julien Cools. With no further goals before the interval, hopes of lifting the giant trophy for a second time were disappearing fast until a frenzied five-minute spell dramatically turned the tie on its head. A Ray Kennedy strike shortly before the hour-mark provided a glimmer of hope. Two minutes later substitute Jimmy Case levelled and the visitors were reeling. With a vociferous Kop baying for victory, Steve Heighway was sent crashing in the box and Kevin Keegan slotted home the winning goal from the penalty spot to give the Reds a slender but priceless first-leg advantage.



CHELSEA (H) DREW 1-1 WON ON PENS

Champions League semi-final second leg 1 May 2007

24

For the second time in three seasons the tactical acumen of Rafael Benitez and force of the Anfield crowd combined as Liverpool clinched their place in the Champions League final at the expense of Chelsea. The Londoners were out to avenge their defeat at the same stage two years earlier, but their 1-0 advantage from the first leg was wiped out by Daniel Agger's side-footed finish within 22 minutes. There was no further scoring in normal time and not even an extra half-hour could separate the teams so a penalty shoot-out ensued. As a place in the Athens final hung in the balance, the decibels grew louder and it was the Liverpool players who held their nerve best – Pepe Reina, with two saves, and Dirk Kuyt, with the kick that clinched victory, emerging as the heroes.



EVERTON (A) WON 5-0

First Division 5 November 1982

An awesome display of finishing by boyhood Evertonian Ian Rush sank Everton on an unforgettable afternoon at Goodison Park. On the Gwladys Street where Rush had once stood, the Blues watched in disbelief as the Welsh striker set the ball rolling after 11 minutes with a cool finish past Southall, and doubled the advantage early in the second half. Mark Lawrenson added a third four minutes later before Rush regained centre stage. On 71 minutes the Welshman completed his hat-trick, slotting home a rebound after his first shot had hit a post. Then up popped Rush again, this time rounding Southall to make it 5-0 – confirming his reputation as the new derby goal-poacher supreme and completing Liverpool's biggest win over Everton since 1965.



22

WEST BROM (A) WON 1-0

First Division 29 April 1901

The League championship took pride of place in the Anfield trophy cabinet for the first time following this hard-earned victory at the Hawthorns. Tom Watson's men went into their final game of the season needing a point to be certain of pipping Sunderland to the title. West Brom's relegation may have already been sealed but it was evident from the first whistle that the champions-elect were in for a stern test – and they were relieved to go in at the interval a goal to the good, scored in the 20th minute by Scotsman Johnny Walker. It was a strike that proved enough to win the game and more importantly Liverpool's first top-flight title. The newly-crowned champions returned home later that evening and thousands of fans were waiting to greet them. Inspirational captain Alex Raisbeck was carried shoulder-high through the crowded streets, while a drum-and-fife band provided the perfect soundtrack to the moment with a rousing rendition of *The Conquering Hero*.

FOOTBALL.

LEAGUE: FIRST DIVISION.

LIVERPOOL WINS THE CHAMPIONSHIP.

LIVERPOOL v. WEST BROMWICH ALBION.

SOUTHAMPTON (H) WON 2-0

Second Division 21 April 1962

This was the day Liverpudlians had longed for since relegation in 1954. After eight years of Second Division mediocrity just two more points were required to confirm their return to the top tier of English football. The weather was atrocious with heavy rain falling throughout the day, restricting the attendance to just over 40,000, but it failed to dampen the party atmosphere inside an expectant Anfield. With Ian St John suspended, Kevin Lewis was drafted in as his replacement and he duly delivered, scoring twice before half-time to easy any nerves. There may have been no further scoring but wild celebrations greeted the final whistle. The crowd invaded the pitch and refused to go home until the victorious players came back out for a final curtain call. When they did many were thrown high into the air, with the previous year's two pivotal signings Yeats and St John ending up on the Kop.



LIVERPOOL'S KOP HAIL THE CHAMPIONS

Ron Yeats and St. John mobbed by happy crowd



21

NEXT MONTH: PART NINE


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31

data mining



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(up to and including 22 March 2014)

50 PREMIER LEAGUE APPEARANCES SINCE HIS DEBUT AT WIGAN ON 24 MARCH 2012 TO THE GAME AT SOUTHAMPTON ON 1 MARCH 2014

RUNNING THE LINE

Manager Brendan Rodgers has been unequivocal about Sterling's job – "to score goals and create goals." But the Reds boss adds: "I know some people were looking at me when I stuck him at right-back a few times [this season] but you see now, whenever he does play in that position, what he can give you both going forward and defensively."

In December 1994 when Raheem was born…

- *Stay Another Day* by East 17 topped the charts
- Web browser Netscape Navigator was launched
- *Dumb & Dumber* and *Richie Rich* played cinemas
- The Stone Roses released the album *Second Coming*
- The first Playstation console was introduced in Japan
- Curly Watts named a star after Raquel in Corrie
- Every kid wanted a Power Rangers toy for Christmas

"THE STRONGEST IN THE GROUP"

Glen Driscoll, head of performance at LFC, coordinates the science and medical teams in line with the training philosophy of Brendan Rodgers. He recently revealed to LFC TV: "Raheem, pound-for-pound, is probably the strongest in the group.

"If we could take the players relative to their body weight and put them in a contest your money would be on Raheem over, say, Martin Skrtel or Mamadou Sakho. His incredible strength and power and his speed and agility are very specific to his position and the job that he performs.

"For a winger I've never seen someone with such a great speed-endurance capacity. I said to him last season that he has a gift there, and as well as his strength and other qualities it's his ability to be relentless that allows him to track the likes of [Bacary] Sagna and [Leighton] Baines and also take them the other way for the whole 90 minutes.

"We can see that, metabolically, his heart-rate isn't affected when he's working so hard. You hear stories about Bjorn Borg having an extremely low, legendary resting heart-rate, but again it's just something that Raheem had. I remember telling him how impressed I was. He's quite a modest chap, he just said thank you! But it's great – it should give him confidence. With him, Jordan Henderson and Luis Suarez and a few others, we're very lucky to have these dynamic players."

5th youngest England player when he made his debut v Sweden on 14 November 2012 aged 17 years and 332 days. There were six other England debutants in Stockholm – Ryan Shawcross, Leon Osman, Wilfried Zaha, Steven Caulker and Carl Jenkinson.

The captain on the comeback

Steven Gerrard says Sterling's paradigm-shift in performance sets him apart from other young prospects: "You've got to understand his age. He's learning the game and who doesn't have a dip in form at 18 years of age? *[Raheem did not start a league game this season until 1 December]* But the mark of a good player, and how good any player is going to be, is how they come back. He's been brilliant." Daniel Sturridge concurs: "You see with Raheem now, he is getting the opportunities to play week in, week out, and is flourishing. But it's important that young players realise it's not going to be an easy journey."



Meet my

Portrait by Nick Taylor



teamies

Amanda Da Costa, Liverpool Ladies midfielder, vice-captain and club magazine columnist, talks us through the defending FA Women's Super League champions

The new WSL season is just around the corner, and after spending hours with each other day in and day out, it's safe to say that my team-mates and I have developed a pretty good understanding of each other. Now it's your turn to learn more about the characters with whom I spend so much of my time…the Liverpool Ladies!



Libby STOUT

A real character off the pitch, most notable for her tight goalkeeper pants! Standing at 5ft 10in, Libby has deemed it necessary to squeeze into a size Small and isn't shy about parading her look around the changing-room. On the pitch she retains this goofiness and likes to have a good time during training sessions. But her American pride does come out every so often – she holds herself to a very high standard and takes what she does very seriously.



Lucy STANIFORTH

Lucy was new to the squad this year and her presence was immediately felt. She is a quiet character who has a mischievous side as well – sometimes I have a hard time understanding when she's being serious or messing with me. Unfortunately we have lost her on the pitch to an ACL injury, but her attitude in the changing-room hasn't changed. I'm grateful to have Lucy around because I think she is an incredible addition to the team – a fantastic player and a positive person who gets along with everyone.



Nicole ROLSER

One of the sweetest people you will ever meet, she is one of two Germans in our squad. In the changing-room she's quiet but at home she has a fun personality. Nici (along with Coco) is my room-mate, and she's become a good friend whom I trust completely. Unfortunately, like Lucy Staniforth, she has suffered from an ACL injury during pre-season and will be much missed as she was a key player in our FA WSL success last season. Her busy and speedy presence on the pitch wreaked havoc for other teams defensively. Our manager, Matt Beard, calls her 'Magnet' because the ball seems to stick to her feet when she runs at lightning pace.

Gemma and the girls parading the trophy at Anfield in October



Katie ZELEM

Another young player, alongside Ellie Stewart, who joined the squad last season. She's best-known for her loud laugh when she has a habit of grabbing the person closest to her! She's very sweet and innocent, always has a smile on her face and loves to chat with anyone around her. On the pitch she has a great understanding of the game for someone so young and her confidence will take her far. Katie reminds me a lot of myself. It's fun bouncing ideas off each other.



Natasha DOWIE

Tash has been a good friend of mine since I arrived. She's easy to talk to and I usually find myself sitting in Costa with her for hours, or in her car blasting out music so loud you can't hear my horrible singing! Tash thinks she sounds like Mariah Carey – you can hear her singing to herself around the stadium. She takes her football very seriously and always tries to get the most out of training. Our friendship off the pitch carries on to it. We've developed a good understanding and link up well in attack.



Danielle GIBBONS

Gibbo, one of our other keepers, has finally made the move to Liverpool instead of commuting to training, and seeing her more often has been a pleasure – she's witty and a secret jokester. In training she's become confident which is great to see and hear – sometimes we're shocked by the commanding voice coming from the keepers' side of training, as she's quiet in the changing-room.



Corina SCHRODER

Coco is one of two German players on our team and also my room-mate. She's on the end of a lot of banter from the other girls, and hates it when they make fun of her English – which is actually very good! I've really enjoyed getting to know her many sides, in particular her 'German Cleaning Lady' mode! On the pitch she's energetic and technical, and I enjoy linking up with her in midfield. She gets forward often from her defensive position and can be an important part to our attack.



Kate LONGHURST

Our very own Beyonce in the changing-room! She is one of the biggest characters I've ever met, and the glue of the team. Her goofy and fun personality is necessary to balance some of our quieter, more reserved ones. She's exactly the same on the pitch as off it, enjoying her football but also taking her performances very seriously.



Ellie STEWART

One of the young ones. After spending time with the squad last year she's grown as both a person and player and is more comfortable within the team. She generally likes to keep to herself but has a bit of banter with Fara Williams. Ellie has finally passed her road test after several attempts, so good luck to her and everyone else on the road when she's out there!



Gemma BONNER

Our captain and an obvious leader on and off the pitch. She might look intimidatingly tall, but she's one of the sweetest and most selfless players on our team. She brings her father's homemade granola to every match and gets swarmed all over when she does. Gemma and I have become close over the past two years, and even though she doesn't always spend the night in Liverpool – home isn't too far of a drive for her – we always make time for coffee to catch up. On the pitch Gemma is the commanding centre-back that we need her to be and her performances have also been recognised at international level as she is now a regular member of our England contingent.



Becky EASTON

The seasoned veteran of the squad – we all look up to her. Becky makes witty remarks under her breath which I feel like only I can hear. She's very intelligent and really easy to talk to. Secretly I hope being good friends with Becky means she won't tackle me during training! She isn't afraid to get stuck in and she has a brilliant understanding of the game that I've tried to learn from.



Katrin OMARSDOTTIR

A good friend since we both arrived at Liverpool last year – she's extremely easy to get along with. Sometimes Katrin shows up to training with so much energy it leads to strange accents and some interesting dance moves. Other days she's quiet and reflective. She changes similarly on the pitch, with moments where she channels her inner Lionel Messi and other times when she keeps her passes simple with precision accuracy.




Our girl with last year's medal



Martha HARRIS

Even though I have a hard time understanding Martha's accent in the changing-room, I've become friends with my fellow 'short' team-mate in the squad. Similar to Gibbo, she can be quiet at times but enjoys practical jokes – especially if they involve Libby and stealing her phone! Martha always ends up defending against me on the training pitch. She is a hard-hitting defender and comes out of nowhere, but she's helped make me a better player because of our battles.



Gemma DAVISON

A new addition to the team, Gemma gets along with everyone and has a passion for the game that is refreshing and fun to be around. I've learned to walk with extremely small steps because she's always trying to 'meg' people with the ball. She's incredibly creative and just wants to play the game. We've linked up well in pre-season and I am looking forward to creating things in attack with her.



Fara WILLIAMS

Another one of our seasoned veterans. When Fara isn't at training, you know something is missing – mainly because things are much quieter! The thing I love about her is that she's not afraid to speak her mind. 'Banter' is her middle name and she buzzes around the changing-room. She has an obvious love for the game and is always trying new things technically and talking to other players. I've tried to learn from Fara to enhance the way I play.



Lucy BRONZE

DJ Lucy is the musical influence, showing up in the changing-room with her JamBox and new material on her iPod. When she goes away with England, the changing-room is boring. Lucy can always be found with a ball at her feet and even juggling tennis balls – or oranges. Her love for the game follows her out onto the pitch, and she isn't afraid to take chances with the ball. Last season we had a really good link-up on the wing. This year she's moved around the back-line, and it's reassuring to hear her voice directing me because she's a player whom I really trust.





The number of goals that puts Gordon Hodgson third in the all-time list of Liverpool marksmen. John Hynes tells his story

Early August almost 90 years ago. Matt McQueen's Liverpool squad, champions in 1922 and 1923, are busy preparing for the new 1924/25 season. Simultaneously, on the other side of the world a group of 20 players are convening in Cape Town to form a South African squad that will spend two months playing a series of exhibition games across Ireland, England, Wales, Scotland and Holland.

They've come from the Orange Free State, Transvaal, Natal and Western Province to make the long voyage by sea. And among them on board RMS Briton are Gordon Hodgson, a 20-year-old forward, and Arthur Riley, a goalkeeper of the same age. Their performances will eventually earn them moves to Liverpool.

At the time of their arrival in Europe – the first game of the tour was a 4-2 win against Bohemians in Dublin on 30 August – foreign players were a rarity in English football. A quick glance at the Liverpool line-up from a 4-2 defeat by Aston Villa on the same date confirms as much, with Belfast-born keeper Elisha Scott the only individual hailing from outside the UK mainland.

So the tourists' games against Wimbledon, Dulwich Hamlet, Brentford, Aston Villa, Zwaluwen (Holland) and Colwyn Bay & District attracted plenty of interest. Many were quick to dismiss their abilities as demonstrated by the weakened teams selected to play against them. To the South Africans, this showed a lack of respect. Whether that was the case or not, their results and style of football definitely impressed, none more so than during their two visits to Liverpool.

The first of those trips took them to Anfield in October 1924 where, watched by 15,000 spectators, they ran out 5-2 winners. The local paper's reporter Ernest 'Bee' Edwards described the 90 minutes as 'a lesson for English league players'.

Two individuals in particular earned his praise. Of Gordon Hodgson he remarked: 'The inside-right, who took my eye from the first moment, is only 19 [he was actually a year older] but plays like a seasoned professional'. Edwards found Riley just as impressive: 'a tall, keen fellow who has reach, anticipation and a safe pair of hands, is only twenty but looks more like thirty-five'.

It has since been reported that Hodgson scored three of the visitors' five goals, when in fact he didn't get on the score-sheet. But those at the club must have been impressed and there's every chance that an Anfield delegation made the short trip to Goodison that December to again view the South Africans as they completed their tour with a 3-2 victory at Everton.

While the tourists enjoyed a farewell dinner at the Exchange Hotel on

> **"This inside-right plays like a seasoned professional"**



Gordon portrayed on a 1928 cigarette card

Tithebarn Street, thoughts of remaining in the UK must have inevitably formed in their minds. Everton were keen to make those hopes a reality, as minutes from a meeting of their directors confirms. Under the caption *S. African Players* was the note: *some of these were desirous of returning to play in England & it was agreed that we make endeavours to secure the services of Riley, Murray, Hodgson and Walker.*

Approval from the FA was to be sought and, if granted, the club agreed to pay them £5 per week. In July 1925 both Riley and David J Murray returned to Merseyside. Murray failed to settle at Everton, leaving for Bristol City after 12 months. Riley joined Liverpool to take up the unenviable task of being back-up to Elisha Scott. The arrival of a substitute goalie didn't quicken the pulse of those on the Kop. A letter to the local paper from a fan who gave himself the title of 'Constant Supporter' details as much: 'I think it's high time the Liverpool directors parted with a little money for a first class centre'.

When it was announced that Hodgson had been purchased, it probably wasn't what fans had in mind. Rumours surrounding the acquisition of 'one of the most famous forwards in the world' must have given 'Constant Supporter' some belief that his request was about to be acted upon. This supposed target wasn't formally identified, although there was some eye-catching transfer activity in the First Division that December as Newcastle signed Hughie Gallacher from Airdrie for £6,500. He would go on to score 143 goals in 174 games.

Meanwhile, Hodgson had again travelled the 5,335 nautical miles to reacquaint himself with Liverpool. Everton still hadn't given up hope of securing his services, with the minutes from a further club meeting declaring: *if the L'pool F.C. had negotiated with Hodgson and paid for his fare we take no action but should he come to us as a free lance & offer his services we enter into negotiations.*

They never had the chance to discuss terms as he was registered as a player at Anfield on 15 December 1925. Four days later, as the fashionable Lewis's store in Liverpool city-centre was opening until 9pm for Christmas shopping, he made his debut in a 1-0 reserves defeat at Manchester City.

March 1926 saw him net his maiden goals for the first team, two in a 3-3 draw at Manchester United. After becoming a regular in the side he also settled quickly off the field, marrying Doris Huckell from Brunswick Road in Islington (the Liverpool one) at West Derby Registry Office in 1928.

A stunning tally of 241 goals in 377 appearances during just over a decade at the club included 17 hat-tricks – a figure still unequalled. His 36 goals, all in the league, during 1930/31 wouldn't be surpassed until Roger Hunt came along three decades later. So impressive was his form that he was picked to represent England, the birthplace of his parents, despite having already played for his native country. And his popularity on the Anfield terraces was emphasised by the fact that a local biscuit-seller named his homemade ginger nuts 'Hodgson's Choice'. Between 1928 and 1933 he also played cricket 56 times for Lancashire.

Gordon was eventually joined in the team by his compatriot Riley, who was the last line of LFC's defence on 338 occasions. The only downside to their time at the club was the lack of silverware, with a fifth-placed finish in 1928/29 the best the team managed.

Their impact was much greater when it came to proving that overseas players could succeed in English football. When they'd arrived in 1925, a non-UK or Ireland-born player was a novelty at LFC. Less than 10 years later, in September 1934, the club fielded four South Africans in a fixture against Portsmouth, Berry Nieuwenhuys and Lance Carr playing alongside Riley and Hodgson.

Season 1934/35 was Hodgson's last full one with the club, as halfway through the next campaign, aged 31, he departed for Aston Villa. Another transfer took him back to the top flight with Leeds United for whom he scored 51 goals in 81 games, although his time in Yorkshire was marred by the death of his wife in March 1938, leaving Hodgson a widower with two children.

The outbreak of the Second World War brought competitive football to a halt and prematurely ended his playing days. He moved into coaching at Leeds and after five years in the role was appointed manager of Port Vale. When George Kay resigned from the post of LFC boss in January 1951 due to poor health, Hodgson – along with Bill Shankly – was one of the candidates interviewed to replace him before the job went to Don Welsh. A few months later Gordon was admitted to hospital with a throat complaint. After his cancer was declared inoperable he returned to his home in Stoke-on-Trent where he died that June aged just 47.

Over six decades later he still stands as one of the greatest goalscorers to wear the red shirt. His collection of 233 league goals is only bettered by Hunt's 245, with all of Hodgson's coming in the top flight.

■ *With thanks to Kjell Hansen.*

LFC all-time goalscorers

(league in brackets)

Ian Rush 346 (229)
Roger Hunt 286 (245)
Gordon Hodgson 241 (233)
Billy Liddell 228 (215)
Robbie Fowler 183 (128)

South African-born Reds

Gordon Hodgson **1925-36**
Arthur Riley **1925-39**
Charlie Thompson **1929-31**
Lance Carr **1933-36**
Berry Nieuwenhuys **1933-47**
Dirk Kemp **1936-40**
Herman Van Den Berg **1937-40**
Bob Priday **1945-49**
Hugh Gerhardi **1952-53**
Doug Rudham **1954-60**
Craig Johnston **1981-88**
Bruce Grobbelaar **1981-94**
Sean Dundee **1998-99**
Mark Gonzalez **2006-07**
(played for Chile)





THURSDAY NIGHT LIVE

Pictures: Nick Taylor Words: Glenn Price

Enter the (young) gladiators

It's a midweek match at Anfield but not quite as we know it. Only the dugouts, the Main Stand directors box and the middle section of the Kop are populated tonight, but the unusual atmosphere makes no difference. This is Anfield after all – still a special place under the floodlights, whatever the day or occasion.

The new Barclays Under-21 Premier League regulations state that clubs must play at least three games at their home ground, meaning that the chance to play at Anfield on a frequent basis isn't reserved solely for the first team anymore. Tonight it's Liverpool v Wolves.

George Sephton, the 'Voice of Anfield', is present and on-form as ever, to enhance the experience for those present on the pitch and in the stands – as well as viewers of LFC TV which is showing the game live.

After George has run through the line-ups, and as *You'll Never Walk Alone* draws to a close over the PA, home skipper Lloyd Jones leads


Kopites (and Pandas) watch the action unfold



It's obligatory



Jordan Rossiter fires through a gold forest



Young fans cheer another Reds goal


One to go

out his Reds side, and goalkeeper Yusuf Mersin receives a warm round of applause as he makes his way towards his goal at the Kop End. Similarities with the 'real thing' occur, just on a smaller scale, and during the game players are visibly uplifted by applause from the crowd for a moment of skill or good play. It means a lot.

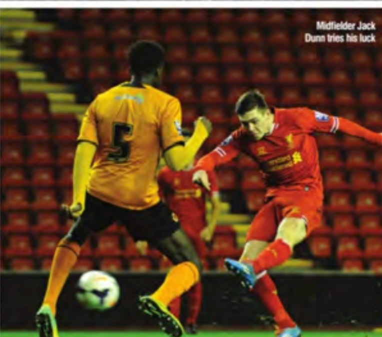
The hallowed turf glows bright green from the floodlights, slick and inviting for a boyhood-dream, knee-slide celebration.

On the night it's a fiver for adults and a quid for kids to get in. The supporters on the Kop are here to see the 'stars of tomorrow' – and at Liverpool during this exciting era that can be taken fairly literally.

For once the multi-ball system is used at Anfield, for the simple fact that a steward may have a long way to go to retrieve a ball from the stands. The lack of a capacity crowd means that coaches' instructions and players' shouts are loud and clear, opening


Czech defender Jakub Sokolik warms up


Man in black: the assistant referee


Midfielder Jack Dunn tries his luck



Sign of the times


One eye on proceedings


Somewhere under there is a goalscorer



Hallowed turf, Anfield Road end



Touchline tango

your ears to the communication that goes on during a game.

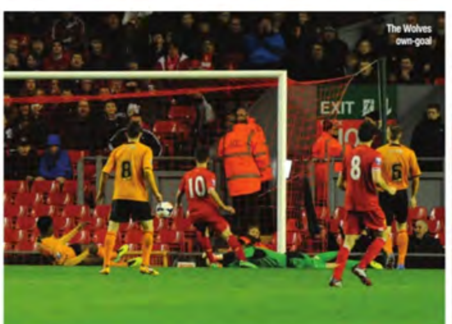
Looking on are Brendan Rodgers and his assistant manager Colin Pascoe, making tonight an opportunity for youngsters to back up training-ground performances and impress the hierarchy on their big stage.

The roar might not be a loud as usual, but when Jack Dunn opens the scoring at the Anfield Road end a few minutes before the interval it's something he'll never forget. The second half begins with two goals in quick succession – a Wolves own-goal followed by a header by Jordan Lussey, who gives Jordan Rossiter a piggyback in celebration. Then Rossiter himself bags a fourth.

At the final whistle the players don't head down the tunnel straightaway – they stay out and begin their warm-



Midfielder Jordan Lussey



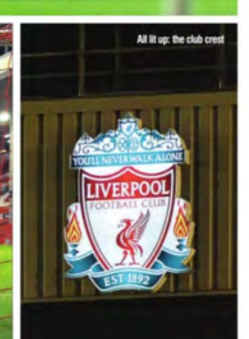
The Wolves own-goal



US striker Villyan Bijev


The chequered flag


Flattening the divots during half-time



All lit up: the club crest





Score check

downs. Once inside they're spoken to by coach Alex Inglethorpe, get changed and make their way to the players' lounge.

Meanwhile Claire Rourke, Neil Mellor and Gary Gillespie analyse the game on LFC TV, before Inglethorpe is interviewed by commentator Steve Hunter, then speaks to writers in the Main Stand media lounge. He calls Anfield a "fantastic place to come and make an impression", drawing on the impact that Michael Owen made when he played here in his youth career. "It gives the manager or the support staff watching just that indication that they're just a little closer to being ready [than others] to perform at such a stadium."

The U21s will be back here in four days' time for another fixture and Alex jokes that the team could get used to it. In truth he knows that no player, whether an Academy prospect or a first-team veteran, should ever take such a rare privilege for granted.

Roll on Monday night.


Fans in focus

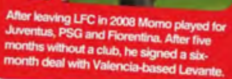

Lussey is congratulated on his headed goal



In the red corner



Momo SISSOKO

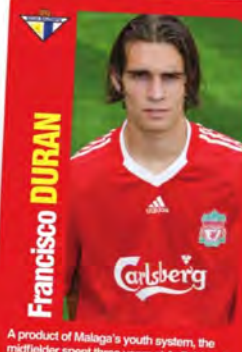


After leaving LFC in 2008 Momo played for Juventus, PSG and Fiorentina. After five months without a club, he signed a six-month deal with Valencia-based Levante.



Emiliano INSUA

The Argentinian left-back is part of the Atletico Madrid squad managed by Diego Simeone and drawn to face Barcelona in the Champions League quarters this season.



Francisco DURAN

A product of Malaga's youth system, the midfielder spent three years at Anfield and has now linked up with Andalusian side Ecija, in the third rung of Spanish football.

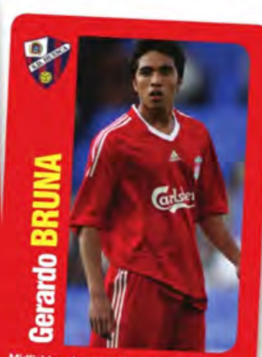
AN EX-RED *Spanish* XI

A team of ex-Reds currently plying their trade in Spain



Alvaro ARBELOA

Now 31, the versatile full-back is a part of the Real Madrid team managed by Carlo Ancelotti and challenging for a domestic double as well as a 10th European Cup.



Gerardo BRUNA

Midfielder who spent four years at Anfield after joining from Real Madrid. Following a spell at Blackpool, he joined Spanish third division side SD Huesca.



Antonio BARRAGAN

Another ex-Reds full-back in La Liga, he's been at Valencia since 2011, figuring under Los Che's second boss of the season, Juan Antonio Pizzi, who replaced Miroslav Dukic.



Nabil EL-ZHAR

The Moroccan winger spent five years at Anfield after coming through the youth ranks at St Etienne. Following a loan at Greek side PAOK, he's been with Levante since 2011.



Javier MASCHERANO

A midfield tiger with the Reds, he's been deployed as a central defender during the past three seasons at the Nou Camp as the Catalan giants chase yet more glory.



Spain

Huesca
BARCELONA
Alcorcon
MADRID
VALENCIA
Levante
Ecija



Xabi ALONSO

A Champions League winner with the Reds, the magnificent Basque midfielder has been at the Bernabeu since 2009 and signed a new two-year deal with Real in January.



Mikel SAN JOSE

The centre-back has been a key part of Athletic Bilbao's defence for six seasons. Now 24, his displays have again helped the Basque side chase a top-four spot.



Daniel PACHECO

A former Barcelona youngster, the talented attacker had loan spells at Norwich, Rayo Vallecano and Huesca before moving to Segunda side Alcorcon last summer.

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Tinie Tempah
7 April



Gary Barlow
11 & 15 April

Elbow
12 April

Cbeebies Live
The Big Band
17 April

McBusted
Busted and McFly
19 April & 13 May

England Boxing Elite Men's National Finals 2014
25-27 April

Jeff Dunham
28 April

Katy Perry
The Prismatic World Tour
21 May

Little Mix
23 May

An evening with
Julie Andrews
27 May

Dolly Parton
Blue Smoke Tour
8 June

Jason Derulo
23 June

Once In A Lifetime - The Final Tour
The Osmonds, David Essex, Showaddywaddy & Bay City Rollers
25 June

History of The Eagles
26 June

Neil Young and Crazy Horse
13 July

Jools Holland & His Rythm and Blues Orchestra
19 July

Radio City Live
20 July



Kylie Minogue
24 September

The Vamps
4 October ON SALE 26 APRIL

Michael Palin
Travelling to Work
11 October

Joan Rivers
Quick... before they close the lid (seriously this could be IT)
18 October

The Big Reunion - Boy Bands
Five / Blue / 911 / A1 / Damage / 5th Story & 3T
28 October



An Evening With
Noel Fielding
7 November

Showaddywaddy
15 November

Paul Hollywood
Get Your Bake On!
16 November

War of the Worlds:
The Final Arena Tour
28 November

Alfie Boe
30 November

Diversity
Limitless - The Reboot
2 December

Status Quo
6 December

Andre Rieu
12 December

John Bishop
Supersonic Tour
18-20 December

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...NOW THAT'S ENTERTAINMENT!

Liverpool Unites acc

it's liverpool

Neil MELLOR

Brendan Rodgers has called upon the club's youth this season – and they haven't let him down



It is a great time to be a Liverpool supporter. In 18 months, Brendan Rodgers has created the most exciting team to watch in the Premier League.

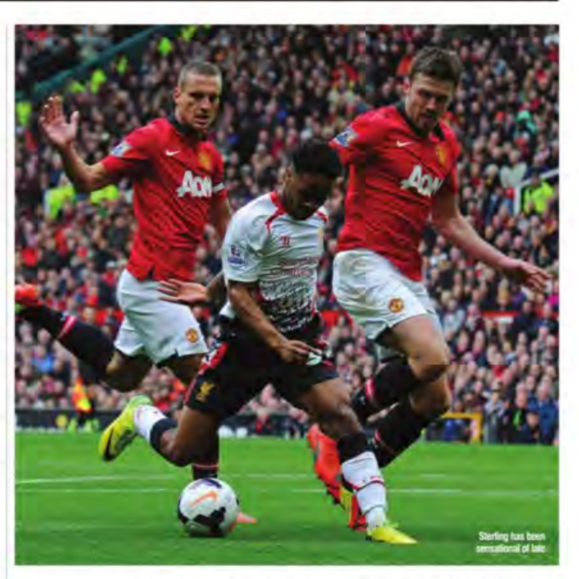
People talk about Kevin Keegan's Newcastle from the mid-1990s being the great entertainers but no other side in my generation has played football like this – tearing into the opposition, scoring lots of goals and, most importantly, winning matches.

Liverpool are a joy to watch. That's what football is about as a fan: looking forward to the match, the excitement and sense of anticipation. Going to Anfield has become a pleasure again. Every game over the next few months will really mean something.

So much time is spent talking about the financial element of football and it's understandable because it usually affects where a team finishes in the league. Liverpool this season have brought the fun back into the game because they aren't predictable and because, if they need a player, unlike other clubs Brendan hasn't always used the transfer market and bought someone ready-made from elsewhere.

Last season there were five Premier League clubs that didn't field an English player under the age of 21 at all: Chelsea, Man City, Stoke, Wigan and Swansea. This was during a period when Liverpool gave debuts to seven players aged 20 or under.

Brendan has looked within the club and really pushed the young players. Raheem Sterling and Jon Flanagan were not even in that group of seven and they have kicked on further than other young players in the Premier League this year. It proves that there is another way to build a team in a relatively short period of time. You just need a manager with the confidence to do it. Not enough are bold like that.



Sterling has been sensational of late

> "This team has it all: pace, youth, world class and a local element"

This Liverpool team has almost everything: pace, youth, two of the best players in world football in Luis Suarez and Steven Gerrard, as well as the local and English element. There's a lot to love. Unlike other Liverpool teams of the last decade especially, the reins are off. The manager trusts his players and they trust the manager.

You get the feeling this could surpass Istanbul in 2005 if we were to win the league. Back then we were underdogs all the way through. There were some narrow scrapes and with each improbable achievement it fed the momentum. This year Liverpool are not really expected to finish as champions due to the increased spending power of other clubs around them. Yet they are playing the most exciting football and getting the results. We are treating the Premier League to the style of football that every supporter wants to see.

I can only imagine what it might be like inside Anfield if Chelsea visit and all is still to play for come the end of the month. It will be like one of those Champions League occasions in 2005 and 07. Jose Mourinho has spoken before about how difficult it was for Chelsea overcoming the intensity of the crowd on those nights. Hopefully it will result in the same outcome this year.

Follow Neil on Twitter @NeilMellor33


AL
LES
ROU



Reds defenders Mamadou Sakho and Aly Cissokho discuss Liverpool's latest French connection. David Cottrell listens in



Resistance, say those nasty Borg types in *Star Trek*, is futile. But then they never strapped Mamadou Sakho into the Cybex machine at Melwood, nor Clairefontaine. As soon as he hears the word 'gym' – in English, prior to the full question being translated by our interpreter – the slightest trace of a smile plays on his lips while to his right in the interview room at Liverpool's training ground Aly Cissokho shrieks with laughter.

The apocryphal tale goes that last September the 6ft 1in, 13st centre-half broke the strength-training equipment at Melwood not long after he'd joined the Reds from Paris St Germain. Is that really true, we ask. *C'est vrai?*

"*Oui, j'ai cassé la machine*… I was wired up to it and I said to it: be careful because you do not know me. They'd fixed me up with these straps that go across the thighs, fastened them really tight. And then [fingers spread wide]… PAH! They snapped."

It happened again at Clairefontaine, the French Football Federation's precursor to England's St George's Park, earlier this year when Sakho, 24, went home for three weeks to continue his comeback from a tendon injury at first thought to be muscular. "*Comme ça*… You sit like that [acts it out] with four lots of strapping round your legs to keep them in place while the machine applies pressure upwards and you press down with your thighs to resist it. For my left [uninjured] leg I asked them to turn it up to the maximum, so I could see how far I'd be able to push my right in comparison. And the straps broke again. They've put an engraving on the machine to say I broke the record! I broke it here too, but I don't know if I've got the record."

What he does know is that the medical teams at Melwood and Clairefontaine have been first-class, working in tandem to manage his rehab, and he wants to place on record his thanks.

December was the month when Sakho truly arrived in the Premier League with a series of assertive displays in central defence at home to





Mamadou against Southampton and (below) Aly in action at Aston Villa



"They wired me up to the machine and I told it: be careful – you don't know me"

Norwich, West Ham and Cardiff and away to Tottenham, before his injury at Chelsea at the end of 2013. For on-loan left-back Aly it had been a different story. Sidelined in August upon his Anfield debut against Notts County in a Capital One Cup tie, the 26-year-old admits that surgery to remove a piece of cartilage from his left ankle delayed his adjustment to the English game.

"But I think the hardest thing," he reflects, "whether you go to Portugal or Spain [where Cissokho played for Porto and current parent club Valencia respectively] or England, is the language. At least with those two other countries and their Latin-based languages it's a little bit easier whereas English isn't as closely related to French, although I still picked up a little from other players who spoke it.

"Maybe that's what Mamadou's found the hardest [having only played in France prior to his move to Merseyside]. Obviously you need to communicate when you're playing the game on the field and in training so yeah, you need a basic grasp as soon as possible. But day-to-day we've picked it up, talking to the other guys. They all made us feel part of things from the word go. Everyone's got the potential here to play in the Champions League and that's what we're working hard to achieve."

Talking of which, what did they make of Roy Keane's comments about the Premier League after some equivocal





"Did I really just say that?"

results by English clubs in Europe, expressly that it was the best brand but not the best league?

Aly again: "*Le football anglais?* There are statistics that you can take from this particular season, and assumptions to be drawn. But the fact that English teams aren't doing quite so well may be down to isolated incidents or errors. It's not as if German football, for example, is dominating Europe at the moment – there's only one team in Germany really. In the past English teams have gone far in the competitions year after year, so any dip may be just temporary."

Either way, have their own games changed in this new cross-Channel climate? "The manager's asked me to get forward as much as I can and that's what I like," continues Cissokho. "Teams in the Premier League, they're always going out to win and they don't tend to sit back, so it's my job to try and exploit the space in behind. One thing I've probably changed is my combativeness. Especially as a defender you need to be able to win the personal battles on the pitch, *les duels* as we call them in France."

"Tempo," says Mamadou. "The intensity and speed of the game here is totally different. It's all very well testing the water but you've to get stuck in – the only way to get used to it is by playing. But I feel like we're there now."

When this magazine first interviewed Aly eight months ago he'd yet to make his debut; it was Aston Villa away at the weekend and the team bus was waiting for him outside. Like anyone starting a new job, let alone in a different country, he was caught a little in the headlights. Now not only does he look and feel at ease but he's the chattier of the two. Which is not to say that Mamadou is bashful – just quieter than the flamboyant pictures on his Twitter feed might suggest.

Who's the most outgoing? "He's more likely to approach someone he doesn't know, to start a conversation," Cissokho gestures towards Sakho, who replies: "Hang on – he's said more today than me! To be fair he's maybe more reserved in the dressing-room, a hard worker who gets on with his job quietly and keeps improving."

Who's the fastest? Sakho: "*Sur le terrain?* On the field? Aly's got to be the quickest." And the strongest? Cissokho: "*Entre les deux?* Between the two of us? He's stronger."

How's this for a nightmare: Suarez and Sturridge and Sterling are in

"If Suarez and Sturridge played against me they'd be facing a lion with red eyes!"

one team, you two are in the other. Discuss. "They're great players obviously," says Sakho. "But don't forget I face up to them in training all the time. And while it wouldn't be easy for me, it wouldn't be easy for them either. They'd be facing a lion! *Avec les yeux rouges!* With blazing red eyes! I'd be ready – I'm not the type of guy to take a step backwards."

Cissokho slaps his own broad shoulders. "They wouldn't find it easy to get past these. The speed as well – I'm fast. Of course it's much better to have them on our side than face them during a game. But I'd like to think it'd be the same with me as with Mamadou."

They first met when they were called up by France for a friendly against Norway in August 2010 – the opening game in charge for Laurent Blanc, now PSG boss. Cissokho played the full 90 minutes while Sakho stayed on the bench, making his own debut three months later in the second half of the 2-1 win over England (featuring Gerrard and Henderson) at Wembley.

While both defenders are of Senegalese origin, Mamadou is Parisian through and through and Aly was raised in Blois, a small city southwest of the capital. "Each town in France has its own accent," explains Sakho. "There's always a slight difference, the same way there is in England. The big noticeable divide is Paris-Marseille, north-south." For the time being the Scouse accent still escapes both.

In one word can they describe the British weather? Aly: "*Gris!* Grey! Mamadou: "*Venteux*... Windy. How about British TV? Aly: "Funny. You seem to like a lot of comedy programmes over here." And British food? Aly again: "The same!"

Both have taken friends and family to Liverpool's Albert Dock and its tourist attractions, but people back home are only really interested in one thing. "We get asked questions about the history of the club, maybe Suarez and Sturridge," says Cissokho. "But mostly it's the legend that is Steven Gerrard."

Sakho breaks into a smile again and nods approvingly. "They ask about that all the time."



SAS: bring it on!

"Investing time and effort in young people"

Mamadou Sakho jumped at the chance to become an ambassador for the Liverpool FC Foundation, the club's official charity, complementing the work that team-mate Lucas undertakes as trustee. The French international regularly visits local school All Saints Primary to assist community coaches who deliver football sessions each week as well as help pupils with their French language studies.

"It's something that I'd done before in the sense that I'd set up a foundation in Senegal, and I very much believe in investing time and effort in young people. I have my own convictions and beliefs, but in terms of this association it crosses cultures, religions, colour and creed. What I'm interested in is helping human beings. In France it's called A-M-SAK [Association Mamadou Sakho]. The slogan is: *Agir pour les autres.* Act for others. One day I'd like to set up an exchange programme so that kids from Liverpool might be able to visit Africa, and France could be visited too – a three-way exchange system."

Mark Haig from the LFC Foundation hails Mamadou as "a fantastic ambassador whose enthusiasm shines through. His input has a positive impact on the schoolchildren here."


Mamadou with pupils from All Saints


Liverpool
YNWA
The Official History of
LIVERPOOL FOOTBALL CLUB
Written by NICKY ALLT Directed by BOB EATON
Starring MARK MORAGHAN

DREAMS & SONGS TO SING

Nicky Allt's new play about Liverpool FC has wowed his hometown, writes John Hynes

Tuesday 3 March 2014. We're sat in a small room underneath the main auditorium at Liverpool's Royal Court theatre. "Bands such as The Clash and Thin Lizzy played in this very room," says playwright Nicky Allt.

From upstairs you can hear the thunder of gunshots echoing around the large arena. Rehearsals for Nicky's latest show YNWA are taking place with a scene set in World War One being run through again and again by the cast and crew as they search for perfection.

With opening night just days away Allt seems remarkably calm. He's done the re-writes and honed the script to make it read exactly as he wants. A lifelong Liverpool FC supporter who first began travelling abroad to watch the Reds at the age of 15, his major problem while writing the show centred around what information to leave out.

Nicky Allt



"Maybe I'm biased – okay I am biased – but there can't be many clubs with such a storied history as Liverpool. Maybe you could argue that United or Everton or Celtic and Rangers could get close to it.

"From the very beginning at Liverpool, there have been ups and downs. How Liverpool was formed in 1892 could be a play by itself because it contains plenty of drama. John Houlding's decision to up the rent created almost a Julius Caesar-style moment when the Everton board voted against him and he was left with a stadium but no club.

"Or the life of Billy Liddell – one of our greats – could be a play. Bill Shankly's time with the club is a great tale by itself. Or the story of Hillsborough and the ongoing search for the whole truth could be a play. Or the 1986 season, when Kenny Dalglish won the title as a player-manager and scored the crucial goal – something that is unheard of – could be a stand-alone story.

"Maybe I am biased but there can't be many clubs with such a storied history"

"Triumph and tragedy runs right through the 122 years the club has been in existence. So trying to fit all of that into one 90-minute show has been very, very difficult. Writing it was a daunting experience. It probably took us three years to bring it to this point.







Thankfully I think we've managed to get it right."

Nine days later Allt's hopes are emphatically confirmed. The capacity crowd, including fomer Liverpool player and coach Ronnie Moran and ex-winger David Fairclough, are taken on a rollercoaster of emotions. It starts with a family called Kelly spreading the ashes of their recently-deceased granddad Tommy at Anfield. While doing so they embark on a look back at his life that was so intertwined with his beloved football club.

The scenes – with the Shankly Gates constantly in the background – transform from a bar to a battlefield and various stadiums where the Reds have won and lost. Each actor fills a number of roles and produces different accents, such as Bob Paisley's Geordie lilt, as the story progresses. There is a giant video screen displaying footage from classic games, including Fairclough's dramatic winner against St Etienne and all the drama of Istanbul.

As Tommy's family, including the youngest members named Kenny (after the King himself, of course) and Tia (an abbreviation of This Is Anfield), discuss and debate the merit of various wins and defeats, the audience are moved to laughter and tears and back again.

All of the club's iconic figures from each decade feature in the production: Alex Raisbeck, Elisha Scott, Billy Liddell, Ian St John, Ian Callaghan, Kevin Keegan, Dalglish, John Barnes, Luis Suarez and Steven Gerrard. There's even a mention of Djimi Traore and, naturally, there are also digs aimed at some of our rivals.

Like any Liverpool game it concludes with a rousing rendition of *YNWA*, with the whole crowd on their feet. "We'll probably have to update the story again in a few years," adds Nicky. "So much happens at LFC, it's never-ending. Hopefully, if we do a new version in a few years, that will include Brendan Rodgers leading us to some silverware. Writing about days like that is never a chore."

"Hopefully we'll update it in the future with Brendan leading us to silverware"

Following its spell at the Royal Court, YNWA The Official History of Liverpool Football Club runs at Dublin's Gaiety Theatre from 2-12 April 2014.





Our man from Transvaal

As we've seen, Gordon Hodgson made goalscoring history at Anfield – but he wasn't the only South African on Liverpool's books before the war. Statistician **Jonny Stokkeland,** creator of the club's Official Archive, provides the fascinating answers...



Q I believe my grandfather, Leslie Dewar, was one of several South Africans that came to Liverpool between the wars. Can you provide any information? Grant Dewar, Australia

A Your grandfather was registered with Liverpool from 8 August 1933, and this is his story...

The Liverpool Official Archives are the brainchild of Norwegian Jonny Stokkeland. He's spent countless hours researching the club's fixtures, not only at first-team level but also reserves and junior matches, and he's keen to help people whose ancestors may have appeared in red.

Leslie Dewar's grandson, Grant, wrote to Jonny: 'Les was born in the Transvaal on 4 September 1911 and from 1942 on he lived in Bulawayo in Rhodesia (now Zimbabwe) and worked as an engineer on the railways.

'As my dad (his son) understands it, Les was noticed by scouts when Liverpool toured South Africa and he played against Liverpool for Transvaal. My dad has never been clear about this, but he thought that he played for Liverpool (at some level) for two or three years. Subsequently he went on to captain Rhodesia in the Currie Cup (a football competition that included all the South African provincial sides). A talented all-round sportsman, he was a distinguished golfer and cricketer and played water polo for Rhodesia.

'He passed away on 22 December 1983. I would be delighted if you could supply any further details'...

Jonny quickly provided Grant with more information. He told the magazine: "Leslie Dewar played in seven Central League matches for Liverpool reserves during the 1933/34 season, all as a right-back. He made his debut in a 4-2 home defeat by Aston Villa and played his last Central League fixture against Manchester City in March 1934. Records show that he also appeared in 25 'A' team matches during the same season – 23 at right-back and two as a left-back. He was named on the LFC retained list dated 17 April for the following season but must have left the club later that summer."

Grant replied with some photographs from the family collection and added: 'The back of the photos carry the official stamp of the Liverpool Evening Standard but are undated and there are no accompanying captions. The first picture, as my dad understands it, is of Les playing for Liverpool against Poland. In the second photo he is the chap in the middle with fellow LFC South Africans Arthur Riley and Gordon Hodgson. I also include a much later picture of him, and a shot of him competing in a golf tournament in Rhodesia against Bobby Locke'...



Les Dewar challenging a goalkeeper

"He was an all-rounder who also played golf, cricket and water polo"

Jonny is fascinated by the photos but admits he can't marry the information with his own research. "I have never heard about a Liverpool match against Poland in 1933/34 but would be delighted to hear from anybody who may know differently.



Les (front row, second from left) with the golfer Bobby Locke (second from right)

"As far as we know Liverpool did not tour South Africa in the 1920s or 1930s either. Gordon Hodgson and Arthur Riley did tour England with a Transvaal team around 1925 [see page 46]. I tried to find Leslie's immigration/travel papers to see if he was on that tour but without any luck. I suspect it would have been an English football agent who maybe got him to Liverpool. Official documents show the club signed him from Bulawayo in 1933."

ASK JONNY...

Jonny and his team aim to help ex-players or families of ex-players requesting information, and are grateful when they receive new biographical details. If you have an LFC-related query you can contact Jonny via lfcmag@programmemaster.com. Jonny is trying to track down line-ups for the following reserve fixtures:

1970/71: Blackpool (H); Blackburn (A); Man City (A); WBA (A); Burnley (H); Derby (A); Bolton (H); Newcastle (A); Preston (A).
1971/72: Aston Villa (A); Man City (H); WBA (A); Preston (A).
1972/73: Leeds United (A); Nottm Forest (A).
1973/74: Derby (A); Man Utd (A); Nottm F (A); Sheff Wed (A); Derby (H); Coventry (A); Bury (A); Stoke (A).
1976/77: Blackburn (A).
1977/78: Bolton (A); Derby (A); Sheff Wed (H); Blackburn (A); Nottm F (A); Blackpool (A).
1978/79: Sheff Utd (A); Stoke (A); Coventry (A); Nottm F (A).

Words: William Hughes

The KOP

GET YOUR 96 PATCH

To mark the 25th anniversary of Hillsborough the club have launched the 'Patch for the 96' – a commemorative iron-on patch for fans to purchase from official club stores and the LFC online store. It costs £2 and all the profits will be donated to the families.

The first team will wear the patch during the final three Liverpool FC home matches, starting with the fixture against Manchester City on Sunday 13 April. Likewise the Liverpool Ladies will wear it for their first game of the season on Saturday 17 April, also against City, until the WSL mid-season break in June. It will also be worn by ex-Reds players at HFSG's Celebration of the 96 charity match at Anfield on 21 Monday April.



The bit at the back for Liverpool's legions of fans at home and all over the world...

The month

CHELSEA CLASH

The Reds resume their Anfield rivalry with Jose Mourinho when the Portuguese boss brings his Chelsea team to L4 on 27 April in a clash which seems set to have a bearing on the top of the Barclays Premier League table and ultimately the destination of the title. The fixture has thrown up some dramatic clashes over the years and Liverpool will be looking to maintain their fine home form as the season nears its conclusion.



LADIES KICK OFF

Liverpool Ladies kick off their defence of the title with a home game against newly-elected Man City at the Select Security Stadium (7.45pm). Ladies season-tickets, covering all home league, Continental Cup and FA Cup fixtures, are available priced: adults £30, children (under 16) & concessions £15 and family (2 adults & 2 children) £60. Visit **www.ladies.liverpoolfc.com/tickets.html**.



ahead



96 REASONS TO CELEBRATE

Anfield 2.00pm Monday 21 April

A special charity event involving Liverpool players past and present will celebrate the lives of the 96. Planned by the Hillsborough Family Support Group and Liverpool FC, the event will include a match between a local Liverpool legends team managed by Kenny Dalglish and an international Liverpool legends team managed by Gerard Houllier.

Players confirmed include David James, Jamie Carragher, Gary McAllister, Ray Houghton, Ian Rush, Robbie Fowler, Steve McManaman, Peter Beardsley, John Barnes, Luis Garcia, Markus Babbel, Jan Molby, Stephane Henchoz, Stig Inge Bjornebye, Dietmar Hamann and Vladimir Smicer.

The event will also include a community football session on the pitch with first team, Academy and Ladies players all involved.

Tickets for this very special one-off event are on sale now, priced £15 for an adult and £5 for kids. All proceeds will be split between the Hillsborough Family Support Group and LFC's charity, the Liverpool FC Foundation, which will be put back into the local community through the Foundation's programmes.

ANNIVERSARIES

9 years since the Champions League victory over Juventus on 5 April
26 years since the famous 5-0 win over Nottingham Forest on 13 April
58 years since Ian Callaghan made his Liverpool FC debut on 16 April
50 years since a 5-0 defeat of Arsenal secured the Division One title on 18 April
13 years since the Reds beat Barca in the UEFA Cup semi-final on 19 April (right)
37 years since the Reds reached their first European Cup final on 20 April



BIRTHDAY XI

Paul Jones 47 on 18 April
Brad Smith 20 on 9 April
Steve Finnan 38 on 20 April
Martin Kelly 24 on 27 April
Tommy Smith 69 on 5 April
Dominic Matteo 40 on 28 April
Ian Callaghan 72 on 10 April
Milan Jovanovic 33 on 18 April
Albert Riera 32 on 15 April
Fernando Morientes 38 on 5 April
Robbie Fowler 39 on 9 April



LFC TV Q&A WITH MATT WALKER LFC TV SENIOR PRODUCER



First game you went to?
A 3-1 defeat against Chelsea at Stamford Bridge in 1984. Jan Molby scored for Liverpool.

Favourite player growing up?
Ian Rush was largely responsible for me having a very happy childhood!

First player you interviewed?
It wasn't a player, but the first interview I conducted at LFC TV was with then co-owner George Gillett!

How hard is it separating being a fan and doing your job?
It's not actually an issue at all – unlike other media outlets we don't need to be totally impartial on the club channel! If anything though, being a supporter and an employee only magnifies the impact of the team losing and winning which obviously has its pros and cons. This season has been brilliant!

Assuming Istanbul is your favourite game, what's number two on your list?
It has to be my first trip to Anfield in October 1990 to see Kenny Dalglish's reigning English champions defeat Chelsea 2-0. A friend of the family was taking me to the game but when we arrived at the ground, we found out it was all-ticket. He managed to get hold of one ticket for the Kop, put his hand on my shoulder, offered me the ticket with his other hand and said, "In you go son." It was magical going into the old standing Kop for the first time as a young teenager and watching that team.

Favourite away ground?
I'm showing my age here again but despite not having a great record there, there was something very special about Arsenal's Highbury stadium.

Star you were happiest to meet?
John Barnes. I worked with John at Channel 5 before I joined LFC TV and he's as great a man off the pitch as he was a player on it.

Favourite opposition player?
I'd go for Manchester City's Vincent Kompany.

Anyone whome you would still like to interview?
There's no-one in particular although the person I would love to have spoken with above all is Bill Shankly. I visited Ayrshire and interviewed his niece and nephew for an LFC TV documentary in 2009 and their generosity, humour and even the way they expressed themselves was totally in keeping with that of the great man himself.





DON'T FORGET THE BUYBACK SERVICE!

Many of LFC's Premier League clashes at Anfield are sell-outs– but if you can't attend the game, we have a suggestion for season-ticket holders. If there's some reason you cannot make it to Anfield, why not return your season ticket seat using our Buyback service and receive credit against the cost of your season-ticket next season if your seat is re-sold to another official LFC member? Don't let your seat go empty – visit **www.liverpoolfc.com/tickets/ticket-exchange** or call 0843 170 5555 to return your seat.





WHY STURRIDGE IS A CLASS ACT!

There's another busy month in store this April on LFC TV. Here's a taste of what's coming up...

KOP KIDS

To keep the children occupied during the Easter hols we've two brand new episodes of *Kop Kids*. Liverpool striker Daniel Sturridge goes undercover at a local primary school to surprise a group of students, while roving reporter Finn leaves Merseyside for Media City as he heads to BBC's *Match of the Day* studios to interview Liverpool legend Alan Hansen. Simon Mignolet and Brad Jones go head-to-head in the latest *Kop Kids* challenge involving toilet rolls and threading needles, and we catch up with what LFC Mascot Mighty Red has been up to. (Episode 8 Thursday 10 April 10am, 3pm & 6.15pm; Episode 9 Friday 11 April 10am, 3pm & 6.15pm).

HILLSBOROUGH

As we remember the 96 on the 25th anniversary of the Hillsborough disaster we've a whole day of special programming on the channel. For more details of each individual show check the listings published on the website www.liverpoolfc.com/lfctv/whats-on-when nearer the time but our blanket coverage goes from 10am through to midnight and includes a live broadcast of the memorial services, starting at 2pm.



CHAMPIONS

Friday 18 April 2014 sees the 50th anniversary of Liverpool's First Division championship triumph of 1963/64. To commemorate this milestone, the pilot show for a forthcoming new series airs for the first time. *Champions* takes a nostalgic look back at our many memorable title-winning campaigns and this episode, featuring studio guests Ian St John, Tommy Lawrence and John Keith, turns the focus on the first of Bill Shankly's three triumphs. (Friday 18 April 9pm).

For just £2.99 LFC TV Online allows you to watch LFC TV live and will give you on-demand access to all the team's goals, highlights, live reserve and under-18 games, news and exclusive video interviews. For more information visit www.liverpoolfc.com/video.

Delayed coverage of every game will also be available on LFC TV which is free to view on Sky channel 429 or Virgin channel 544. For full listings visit www.liverpoolfc.com.

FIXTURES 13/14

AUGUST

Fixture	Result
17 Stoke City **(H)**	1-0
24 Aston Villa **(A)**	1-0
27 Notts County **(H)** (COC 2)	4-2

SEPTEMBER

Fixture	Result
1 Manchester Utd **(H)**	1-0
16 Swansea City **(A)**	2-2
21 Southampton **(H)**	0-1
25 Manchester Utd **(A)** (COC 3)	0-1
29 Sunderland **(A)**	3-1

OCTOBER

Fixture	Result
5 Crystal Palace **(H)**	3-1
19 Newcastle Utd **(A)**	2-2
26 West Brom **(H)**	4-1

NOVEMBER

Fixture	Result
2 Arsenal **(A)**	0-2
9 Fulham **(H)**	4-0
23 Everton **(A)**	3-3

DECEMBER

Fixture	Result
1 Hull City **(A)**	1-3
4 Norwich City **(H)**	5-1
7 West Ham Utd **(H)**	4-1
15 Tottenham H **(A)**	5-0
21 Cardiff City **(H)**	3-1
26 Manchester City **(A)**	1-2
29 Chelsea **(A)**	1-2

JANUARY 2013

Fixture	Result
1 Hull City **(H)**	2-0
5 Oldham (FAC 3) **(H)**	2-0
12 Stoke City **(A)**	5-3
18 Aston Villa **(H)**	2-2
25 Bournemouth (FAC 4) **(A)**	2-0
28 Everton **(H)**	4-0

FEBRUARY

Fixture	Result
2 West Brom **(A)**	1-1
8 Arsenal **(H)**	5-1
12 Fulham **(A)**	3-2
16 Arsenal (FAC 5) **(A)**	1-2
23 Swansea City **(H)**	4-3

MARCH

Fixture	Result
1 Southampton **(A)**	3-0
16 Manchester Utd **(A)**	3-0
22 Cardiff City **(A)**	6-3
26 Sunderland **(H)**	
30 Tottenham H **(H)**	

APRIL

5 West Ham Utd **(A) 4:00pm**
12 Manchester City **(H) 1:30pm**
19 Norwich City **(A) 12:00pm**
26 Chelsea **(H) 2:05pm**

MAY

3 Crystal Palace **(A)**
11 Newcastle Utd **(H)**

All kick-off times are BST. All Barclays Premier League fixtures are subject to change for the requirements of television and/or for other reasons such as police requests.
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Please check **www.liverpoolfc.com** for the latest details as and when they happen.



SEND YOUR SCARF GET YOUR PATCH

Liverpool FC has asked football and sports fans across the world to send in their scarves as a sign of global unity at the 25th anniversary of Hillsborough on Tuesday 15 April, when the Memorial Service takes place at Anfield.

Each scarf will be laid out on the pitch in the shape of the number '96'. After the service, the Liverpool FC Foundation will donate all the scarves to local good causes, including homeless charities, along with a signed item of LFC memorabilia. As a result, the club unfortunately won't be able to return the donated scarves.

Margaret Aspinall, chair of the Hillsborough Family Support Group which is planning the Service, says: "We already receive so much support worldwide, but if we could create this symbol of unity on the pitch, it would be a moving way of bringing the world together for the 25th anniversary."

All scarves should be sent to: Hillsborough Scarves, 20 Chapel Street, Liverpool L3 9AG by Tuesday 8 April to be guaranteed that they are included in the display.

To further mark the 25th anniversary the club have launched the 'Patch for the 96' – a commemorative iron-on patch. It costs £2.00 and the profits will be donated to Hillsborough families. The first team will wear it during the final three Liverpool FC home matches, starting against Manchester City on Sunday 13 April. Likewise the Liverpool Ladies will be wearing the patch for their first game of the season on Saturday 17 April, also against City, until the WSL mid-season break in June. For more information, visit www.liverpoolfc.com.

NEVER FORGOTTEN 96 25 YEARS

25th Memorial Service

Tuesday 15 April 2014 will be the 25th anniversary of the Hillsborough disaster that cost 96 Liverpool fans their lives. The HFSG will mark the occasion with a Memorial Service at Anfield commencing at 2.45pm prompt with access to the stadium possible from 1pm. A one-minute silence will be observed at 3.06pm and the Service will conclude at around 3.45pm with the singing of *You'll Never Walk Alone*. Please note the deadline for obtaining tickets was Monday 31 March 2014. LFC TV will be covering events from 10am through to midnight including a live broadcast of the Service starting at 2pm.

Away days

With an early kick-off at Norwich on 20 April one Red recalls past adventures in East Anglia

According to the AA the road journey from Liverpool to Norwich should take just short of five hours. A lot of people would prefer to 'swerve' spending that amount of time on the motorway.

Stephen Monaghan, understandably, looks at trips to Carrow Road slightly differently. "I made the journey to Georgia to see us play Dinamo Tbilisi in 1979," the 54-year-old says. "We lost that game 3-0 so you can imagine how long the trip back felt. The few hours spent going to see us play at Norwich is nothing compared to all that. Even going to Norwich in the depths of winter when the weather was horrific, like we did for a League Cup tie in 1979, was a picnic compared to getting back from Georgia."

Stephen – or 'Mono' as he's known to many Reds supporters – first watched the team play away from Anfield in September 1968. "I was only nine at the time. My dad took me to see us at Wolves and we won 6-0. Roger Hunt, Peter Thompson and Alun Evans all scored twice. The journey, the excitement of going to a different ground – it was all new to me and I was hooked."

Since that day he's been a regular member of the travelling Kop, and Carrow Road has been ticked off many times. "Norwich has an image as a family club and I think that's very accurate," he continues. "Their fans are very friendly. When I used to go there in the late Seventies and early Eighties I always got the impression that they wanted to see Liverpool play as much as support their own club. We were obviously the best team in Europe around that time and they were curious to see what all the fuss was about."

Sunshine outside Norwich City's stadium



Carrow Road



Last season Monaghan and his friends repaid some of the hospitality they've received on their visits to East Anglia. "We stopped off in a village about 15 miles from Norwich. In the pub we got chatting to a few locals. One of them, a farmer who was about 50, said he was a Norwich fan but he'd always loved the way Liverpool played and tried to pass the ball. Out of nowhere one of the lads asked if he wanted to come to the game with us that afternoon.

"He said he'd only dropped in for a quick drink and the missus wouldn't be happy if he disappeared off to the game. We eventually persuaded him to join us."

Afterwards, following a 5-2 win for Brendan Rodgers' team with Luis Suarez grabbing a hat-trick, they

> **"We stopped at a village and took a farmer to the game!"**

dropped their guest back to the same licensed premises. "He was made-up and said none of his friends or family would believe what had just happened."

That victory was the third time Stephen has witnessed a Liverpool player claim the matchball at Carrow Road. "I was there for the 5-3 win in February 1980. That was a superb game. They went ahead in the first minute through Martin Peters. Seeing someone like him in action – a World Cup winner – always gave me a buzz.

"Norwich had a decent side then and really attacked us. Despite David Fairclough getting a hat-trick it wasn't until Kenny Dalglish and Jimmy



Norwich City v Liverpool
12.00pm Sunday 20.04.14



Case scored in the last few minutes that we secured the victory."

Despite Fairclough getting three goals it was another forward who featured in the headlines. "Justin Fashanu's volley to make it 3-3 was brilliant. We were all chatting about it on the way home afterwards. I think it won goal of the season. The fact that it overshadowed another player getting a hat-trick demonstrates just how good it was. It's so famous people just refer to it as 'the Fashanu goal'."

Fast-forward to 2012/13 and all the talk afterwards was about one player: Suarez. Each of the Uruguayan's strikes that evening were impressive, with then manager Kenny Dalglish commenting: "Every goal was a great goal." It was the last of the trio, a lob from just inside the Norwich half, which really caught the eye.

"Those are the kind of performances and goals you'll never forget,"



Luis on target at Carrow Road last season

"In the old days it'd take a good six hours to get there"

Monaghan says. "Moments like that are why you follow your team everywhere. I wouldn't bet against him scoring another hat-trick when we go to Norwich this time."

The upcoming trip to the Canaries home on Sunday 20 April – our penultimate away outing of 2013/14 – looks like being a vital fixture with every point required in the quest for a Champions League spot, or possibly even more. Monaghan has been there for a similarly important 90 minutes in the past.

"It was March 1976 and we were competing for the title with QPR, Manchester United and Derby County. Because three other teams were up there with us it felt like every single point really mattered. It was only two points for a win back then, but we dreaded drawing because that could have been fatal to our chances of becoming champions."

Debating the various permutations provided Stephen and his friends with plenty of topic for discussion. It was a useful way to pass the many hours needed to reach Norwich then.

"We had to get up at around 3.30am



to catch the first bus in to town. Then our coach, it was with a company called Crown Coaches, left at 6am. I'm not certain but it might have taken six hours to reach Norwich. The motorway wasn't as good as it is now."

Their dedication was rewarded with a 1-0 win, courtesy of another Fairclough strike just before the hour mark. "It was a very nervous afternoon. Norwich had won 3-1 at Anfield earlier in the season, so we knew they were capable of causing us some problems. But it was around that time of the season where we really produced some great form and ended up topping the table by a single point, thanks to a memorable win at Wolves on the last day."

It all means that while others might not relish seeing 'Norwich away' on the fixture list, Monaghan looks upon it with fondness. "I've always enjoyed it. A big part of that might be the fact that I've rarely seen us lose there. We might have suffered the odd 2-1 defeat but apart from that we've usually done well. If that trend continues this time it will hopefully play a big part in us finishing high up the table."

CARROW ROAD IN 3

1 To the right of the away section, just behind the corner of the Jarrold South Stand and Barclay End, is the Holiday Inn Norwich City, opened in 2007.

2 Among the yummy mains at the stadium's Delia's Restaurant & Bar (open Friday and Saturday evenings): classic steak au poivre with hand-cut chunky chips; baked pork chop with wild mushrooms, crème fraiche and thyme; smoked haddock with spinach and chive butter sauce.

3 Former Canaries star Darren Huckerby entertains guests in a Matchday Club at the stadium named after him.

MIND YOUR BUSINESS
Road Safety at Work

Wirral Council's Road Safety Team offers FREE support to businesses within East Wirral to encourage safer driving and strive towards an accident free culture in your company.

Driving is one of the most dangerous workplace activities. Up to **1 in 3 crashes involve a vehicle being driven for work**. If one of your employees was involved in a collision while driving for work, it could have a significant financial impact on your business. This could be:

- Company vehicles being off the road
- Cost of repairs
- Staff taking sick leave
- Lost business
- Damaged company reputation
- Increased insurance premiums

By helping to manage your work related Road Safety, Mind Your Business can work with all employees to reduce the risk of being involved in a collision and avoid these costly repercussions for your business.

Road Safety Package

This project is funded by the Department for Transport (DfT)

• Policy & Procedure Assistance

The Road Safety Team can help your business develop a "Driving at Work" policy covering issues such as:

- Legal responsibilities – Compliant with current Legislation
- The driver – Hours, daily/weekly, fatigue
- The vehicle – Roadworthy, service records, company/own vehicle
- The journey – Planning, is it necessary, alternatives

• Theory Workshops

- Accident causation – Corporate Manslaughter
- Grey fleet vehicles – Who is responsible
- Speed – Different vehicles
- Mobile phones – Modern technology

• Driver/Rider Training

Individual practical driver/rider sessions to include:

- Defensive driving
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Pupils and participants at the event

Giving racism the red card


Libby Stout and Danielle Gibbons


Howard Gayle signs aurtographs

The Liverpool Football Club Foundation recently welcomed more than 100 pupils from local schools across the city to Anfield for Show Racism the Red Card's Anti-Racism Educational Event.

SRtRC is an educational charity using football to convey a strong anti-racism message to young people. It runs over 40 events at different clubs throughout the season. This event, sponsored by Liverpool City Council & Sefton CVS, brought together local pupils with current and former players in an anti-racism workshop with the screening of a film and a Q&A session.

The panel of guests included former players Howard Gayle and Neil Mellor, current Liverpool Ladies players Libby Stout and Danielle Gibbons, Premier League referee Chris Foy and MP for Liverpool Walton, Steve Rotheram. Mighty Red, the club's official mascot, was also there to hand out prizes to the pupils who asked the best questions.

Ged Grebby, chief executive of SRtRC, said: "We believe education is vital in tackling inter-generational racism which is why we are delighted that Liverpool agreed to host one of our education events. We hope this event has a positive impact on the young people that attended."

TEXAS TOURNAMENT



The Dallas Cup squad with head coach Carl Macauley

Students at the Liverpool FC Foundation Football College, which is based at Wyncote Sports Ground in South Liverpool, are preparing to compete in one of the biggest youth tournaments in the world next month – the Dallas Cup in Texas.

Held during Easter Week, the invitation-only tournament selects the best 180 teams to play in seven different age categories ranging from Under-13 through to the prestigious U-19 Gordon Jago Super Group. College scouts attend games and many students are offered scholarship in the USA as a result of their performances.

The 20-strong Football College's squad will train with the Houston Dynamo in Texas from 7 to 11 April then travel to Dallas for the tournament, which runs from 12 to 21 April. The finals will be held at the 90,000-seater Cotton Bowl Stadium, a former FIFA World Cup venue. During their time in the States the players are placed with American families as part of a 'homestay' programme.



Carl coaching the lads

College director David MacDiarmid calls the occasion a "life-changing event for our students – we have many success stories where they have gone on to gain scholarships, university places and coaching jobs. LFC first-team fitness coach Jordan Milson is a perfect example. He competed in the Dallas Cup and gained a scholarship at a US university which led to him pursuing a successful career in football."

The Liverpool FC Foundation Football College, which is open to boys and girls aged 16 to 19, offers a unique learning experience that enables students to combine academic studies with football training and FA coaching qualifications. For more information please email **contactus@salteducation.com.**

HEARTS AND MINDS

Personnel from Liverpool FC Foundation's Military Veterans Programme took part in a cardiac-screening event in February to raise awareness of heart health.

The **Vital Sounds Foundation** (VSF) event, which was aimed at 15 to 35-year-olds, took place on Liverpool John Moores University's campus. VSF was formed in 2010 by Steve Haw following the death of his son Chris. It seeks to raise awareness of sudden cardiac arrest and the importance of screening young people for undiagnosed conditions.



Some of the vets

Mark Haig, head of operations at Liverpool FC Foundation, said: "We work in partnership with Liverpool Clinical Commissioning Group to deliver a Men's Health Programme that provides advice and support to more than 10,000 local men. Raising awareness of such events through our programme helps to engage with as many people as possible."

For further information, please visit **www.lhch.nhs.uk/vsfheartcheck.**



Watching a demonstration



With Bob Humphries, season-ticket holders representative on the LFC Supporters Committee

Bob (front row left) next to steward Chris Grimes with fellow Kopites



Tell us a little about yourself Bob...

I'm married with three daughters and live in Orrell Park in Liverpool. I've supported Liverpool FC all my life and have been lucky enough to attend all seven European Cup finals during many years of following LFC all over the globe. I've also been a season-ticket holder for over 35 years.

And your role with the Supporters Committee?

I'm the representative for season-ticket holders and hospitality supporters, while I'm also honoured to be the first elected chair of the SC as voted for by my peers. Given the length of time that I've been a season-ticket holder, along with the fact one of my daughters waits patiently on the waiting list, I had a perspective from both sides that led me to believe that this would be the best constituency for me out of the 12 that exist on the SC.

I try to engage with as many supporters as possible within my constituency by holding open fan-forum events, attending meetings of supporter groups, taking part in and reading fan forums and ensuring my contact details are in the season-ticket renewal booklet, as well as providing face-to-face opportunities at the match. I can also be contacted via the official LFC website and the SC have their own Twitter and Facebook accounts. Both as chair and a constituency representative I have access to club officials, and along with the four official joint-meetings that we have, many smaller meetings, conference calls and email correspondence takes place to try to address supporter issues, concerns or suggestions. It's a great opportunity for fans voices to be heard.

Can you give us an example of the work that you do?

It can be very varied, from dealing

with individual fans who have had difficulties with their season-ticket cards to broader issues such as the cost of tickets. All issues are fed into the club and although we cannot promise what all supporters want, they will at least get a response by using committee members.

Issues that have brought about demonstrable change include: the completion of a more transparent, online season-ticket waiting list (STWL) so supporters can check their progress; the opportunity for season-ticket holders and members to purchase tickets together through the Auto Cup Scheme so they can sit together; and the introduction of upfront ticket pricing for cup ties so that fans know at the start of the season the maximum price that each game will cost them.

Just recently, following feedback from fans, the club has agreed to the SC's request to introduce child prices around the stadium for those season-ticket holders who have tickets in their child's name. Discussions are ongoing about introducing more junior and young adult tickets within the stadium.

What's the current situation regarding waiting lists?

Currently the STWL is closed as it would be pointless to open it up with 28,000 on it already and only maybe two or three hundred surrendering their tickets each season. As I say, supporters can use the online facility to see where they are on the list and update their personal details, which is really important.

The club have no immediate plans to open the list back up again, but once the plans for a redeveloped stadium have been established, there may be an opportunity to review the situation.

Follow the Supporters Committee on Twitter @LFCSupCom. And for more information visit www.liverpoolfc.com/fans/supporters-committee/contact.



WE ARE PRO LIVERPOOL AND ANTI NOBODY

STADIUM UPDATE



Anfield stadium and the wider area from the air

The LFC Supporters Committee has taken part in a consultation meeting in relation to the recently-launched Spatial Regeneration Framework document. The SRF outlines details of the proposed regeneration of the Anfield area including stadium redevelopment.

Local residents and businesses have been asked for their views on the SRF before it is finalised and formally adopted as what's called a Supplementary Planning Document by Liverpool City Council. LFC managing director Ian Ayre describes it as "another important milestone in the regeneration project as we continue this exciting journey to transform the area.

"Any final decision continues to be based on certainty – that we can obtain the necessary land; that there is demand for any future stadium expansion; that we have home owners' support; and that we will be able to navigate the complex planning landscape."

Subject to approval the document is to be submitted to the cabinet again for official adoption in April. It could pave the way for new housing and businesses, a hotel and new public space, a proposed expansion of Liverpool FC's stadium and a range of new community facilities.

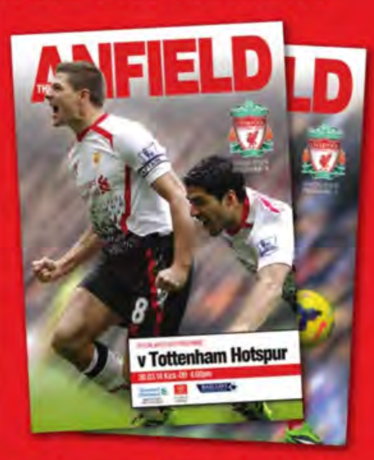
Major improvements have already been made to the wider Anfield area including over £72m of housing since 2005, the restoration of Stanley Park, and the construction of the new Four Oaks Primary School and Mere Lane Health Centre.



RED ALERT



ORDER BACK ISSUES AND SUBSCRIBE TO THE MAGAZINE AND PROGRAMME



The first issue of the Liverpool FC monthly magazine coincided with the beginning of the Brendan Rodgers era at Anfield – and since then it's become a must-read for Reds at home and abroad. You can take out a money-saving subscription, or order individual back issues to complete your set, at www.programmemaster.com – just as you can for This Is Anfield, the essential matchday programme.

Visit www.programmemaster.com or call 08700 202020

WISH LIST

Spring/Summer is coming and there's really no excuse for not supporting the Mighty Reds in style – and these are just a few must-haves from the **Official LFC Collection**. The range in its entirety can be viewed and purchased online at **liverpoolfc.com/store** and any Official Club Store.

1



3



4



2



5



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"The entire audience were singing You'll Never Walk Alone – well, except the Evertonians..."







Liverpool band Space are back with their first new album for a decade. The lads are all big Liverpool fans and we caught up with drummer Allan Jones, bassist Phil Hartley and singer Tommy Scott to talk football...

When the band started, Roy Evans was Liverpool manager...

Tommy: Back then, 20 years ago, I loved the team we had. But then I've enjoyed almost every team we've put out. I've just gone with every style we've had. My attitude is if that's the way we're playing, just stick by it. That team was great to watch. Fowler was a genius and I loved Collymore as well.

Phil: I thought it used to be a lot more interesting back then. I used to be into it a lot more then.

Tommy: The problem with Phil is he's more into ballet as you can tell! That was a great time for us as well because we played the Royal Court and Fowler and McManaman came on stage. The entire audience were singing *You'll Never Walk Alone* – well, the entire audience except the Evertonians! It's always boss playing in the city. You get a bit more nervous because everyone knows you and that, but it's just great.



There's nothing like it when everyone's going for it in your own town. The lads came backstage and everything.
Allan: I thought it was really exciting when Roy Evans came in because he brought about a change by putting three at the back. He bought Neil Ruddock, John Scales and Phil Babb and he was putting new philosophies into it but unfortunately we didn't win the title and probably didn't achieve as much as we should have done. But under Rodgers now it's just as exciting.

Are your families all Reds?

Phil: Diehard. My nan used to take us to Wembley when we were kids, seven or eight. Every time we got there. So there's never been any option.
Tommy: My dad was a Blue but I just rebelled against it. Apparently he used to take me to Everton matches when I was kid but I can't remember it so I'm alright!

One player whose career has coincided with the band's timeline is Steven Gerrard...

Tommy: He could easily be the best player Liverpool has ever had. He is a Scouser too and that's why I'm made-up to see Flanagan coming through as well. I think it's important to have some Scousers coming through. I do watch the kids on LFC TV but I'm not sure which ones are Scousers. I know it's a hard task, but since he's been here Brendan Rodgers has always shown that he's willing to give the young players a chance in the team.
Allan: I don't know what Steven's goalkeeping skills are like but I wouldn't be surprised if they were good because he can do everything else can't he? I agree about the young players. Conor Coady's been doing well at Sheffield United. It would be good to get him back next season and maybe he could be another of the next generation of local lads in the team. Perhaps he could be the next Gerrard.

> **"I remember walking into the ground and just going: oh wow. It's still the same"**

You must be excited to be back on the road?

Tommy: We're chuffed to bits. It's great to be back with this new album and also playing all the old tunes. We're buzzing off this new album. The way I write songs is the same. That quirky dark humour is still there. Some bits have got a ska vibe too.
Phil: We just want to get it out there and play it. The more, the better. We're back for good now and we're looking forward to planning the next one. Wth this record, there were no preconceptions. It's kind of the songs that you love and wanted to do. You know: I love this tune so we're going to go ahead and do it. It's nice that's it's all come together as a good album.

You're on tour with Republica - how did that cone about?

Tommy: Social media! They became friends with Franny, our keyboard player, over Facebook and Twitter. After a while there was a suggestion: why don't we tour together? And we thought: why not? Let's go for it.
Phil: Social media makes things a lot more personal and the fans seem to love that. There are always people on Facebook sending us messages after gigs and they're always made-up when we answer them. I've got to know some of my heroes via Facebook. You message them and when they get back to you it is a buzz.

The lads relaxing in the LFC TV living room

The title of the album is unusual...

Tommy: *Attack of the Mutant 50ft Kebab* is one of the songs on the album and it's about a kebab shop on a small side-street. It gets haunted and is sick of being on the small street in the shadow of the big stores and mutates into a kebab and starts attacking the high street but it goes too far and destroys the world!

Has football inspired any of your songs?

Tommy: Actually one of our albums which has never came out had a song on it called *Love You More Than Football*. It's about a fella who's been to prison because he wouldn't pay his taxes. He's basically messed his wife around that much that the only way he can say sorry is by saying: I love you more than football. But you don't know if he's lying! Our manager wants us to release those songs and there are plans to put that album out as part of a box set at some point.

Finally, can you remember your first games at Anfield?

Tommy: Well, I'm old! I remember going to a match when Keegan was playing where I think we battered Benfica about 19 million-nil! I'll always remember that. I also remember a game on the Kop back in the day when they didn't have seats. It was the first time that I went with my mates. Some fella behind me saw me and put me on his shoulders so I watched the whole match from there, which was great! Our keyboard player Franny is still a season-ticket holder on the Kop. I'm not sure exactly where but I do know he's always moaning about the people who stand behind him.
Allan: When I was about six I went to my first game with me 'arl fella. It was against Man City and it was the most boring 0-0 you can remember!
Phil: My first was in the Eighties. It was a Chelsea game but I can't remember exactly when. I remember walking into the ground and just going: oh wow. That sense is still there.

■ **Space's new album *Attack of the Mutant 50ft Kebab* is out now.**

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Natasha Dowie on Instagram



2 March
Girl power with @gembon23, @fara44, @lucybronxe and gem.d



1 March
Ice bath in the sea



26 February
Liverpool FC ❤



24 February
Always nice when a kid turns up to ur soccer camp with the right shirt on



16 February
The girls on coach on away trip to Sunderland for our first pre season friendly



11 February
Teamies having some lunch



15 December
Serious face at FA photo-shoot



1 December
WSL players player of the year award 2013 #Wow



24 November
Defo keeping this #Ace



13 October
Thumbs up!



30 September
Pile onnnnnnn!



30 September
Best feeling ever winning the WSL with this group of players and my BF @beckyeaston16 #Blessed



Ian RUSH

You never tire of running out onto the Anfield pitch

Getting involved in the dressing-room banter with the lads, walking down the tunnel, touching the sign and then making your way up the steps out in to what can only be described as a special place…

Matchday at Anfield, particularly that moment when the noise of the crowd hits you, is something I'll never take for granted. It still excites me now, even after I've played there probably hundreds of times. I never tire of doing so and am looking forward to running out of that tunnel again on 21 April for the Celebration of the 96 charity match.

It's hard to believe 25 years will have passed since that tragic day at Hillsborough. I was sat on the bench that afternoon and, like everyone else involved, will never forget what happened. The families of the 96 deserve a lot of credit for the dignified way in which they've handled themselves since then. This game is a chance to pay tribute to the loved ones they lost and there is no better way to do that than by putting on an entertaining match.

Football should be all about entertainment, as Brendan Rodgers' team have proved this season. They've excited all of us with the amount of goals they've scored and the relentless way in which they keep trying to put the ball in the net. It's brilliant to watch and I'm sure the forward players in particular really enjoy it.

When I worked under Bob Paisley, Joe Fagan and Kenny the philosophy was similar. If the opposition scored two the boss wanted us to get three.

"Forwards must enjoy playing in Brendan's team so much"



[illegible]

Or, if we were 1-0 up he'd want us to go on and add to the lead.

At Juventus that wasn't the case at all. If we went ahead the rest of the team were quite happy to just hold onto what we had. I remember arguing with the manager there about it because I'd been brought up the Liverpool way. The culture of Italian football was very different. One-nil was sufficient. There was no need to take any risks by trying to add to that advantage.

You can be guaranteed neither Kenny or Gerard Houllier, who are in charge of the two sides, will have that approach on Easter Monday. The game might be for charity but both of them will be very determined to win. I obviously know Kenny really well and he is still as competitive as ever. I'm the same, although I'm realistic enough to know that playing for 90 minutes is probably beyond me now. But just getting on the pitch for a few minutes will be satisfying.

A few people have said I could be up against Stephane Henchoz and Markus Babbel, as they're lining out for Gerard's international squad. That will be interesting as they are obviously from a different generation. I know what lads like John Barnes can do – it's seeing others who you didn't play alongside which is the most interesting part of events like this.

I'm really looking forward to it. What I'm not looking forward to is the aching legs I'll certainly have the following day. But it will be well worth the effort.

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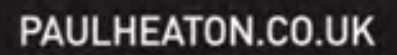
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WHATHAVEWEBECOME.NET

New Album 'WHAT HAVE WE BECOME' out on May 12th on Virgin EMI

WHAT IF...

JOHN HOULDING HAD CALLED THE CLUB ANFIELD FC IN 1892

And we're getting news of another goal in the morning kick-off at Kemlyn Road – it's now Anfield 3 Everton 2, so quite a game in progress there in the Merseyside derby…"

'Anfield'? It just might have been. In the beginning there was no guarantee that Liverpool FC would be the name of the new club formed from the schism between chairman John Houlding and Everton FC in 1892. Originally he pressed ahead with plans to form a limited liability company and registered 'The Everton Football Club and Athletic Ground Company Limited' at London's Somerset House.

The FA was asked to adjudicate on the matter with officials of the former club claiming 'Everton' was already in use. The FA found in their favour and ruled they would not accept a similar name. Houlding consulted his secretary William Barclay about the new name, but had he followed a popular convention of the time he may have opted to name the team after the district of the city in which they were based – examples being Newton Heath (Manchester United), Small Heath (Birmingham City) and St Mark's, West Gorton (Manchester City). Had that been the case, you could now be reading Anfield FC's official magazine – and fans might be singing about the fields of Kemlyn Road instead.

Bill Shankly would've loved the psychological boost of seeing the club at the top of the pre-season league tables, Anfield coming as it does ahead of Arsenal and Aston Villa in alphabetical order.

John Houlding (below) gave us our name



In his wisdom, however, Houlding's decision to take counsel from the man who'd been his vice-president at Everton was a good one. Barclay believed it was vital that the new club had a name reflecting a citywide appeal. He was ahead of his time in that regard with it now attracting a global support. When Barclay met Houlding at Stanley House (still standing on Anfield Road) to discuss the way forward, the name Liverpool Football Club was instantly approved.

Even then, things didn't run smooth as there was already a sports club bearing that name, the city's rugby union side. But in May 1892 'The Liverpool Association Football Club' was formally registered. It was an inspired choice.


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